An Introduction to Indian Art

Part II

Textbook in Fine Arts
for Class XII

12144

© NCERT not to be republished

विद्यया ऽमृतमश्नुते
एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Reprint 2026-27

12144 – An Introduction to Indian Art
Textbook for Class XII

ISBN- 978-93-5292-337-3

First Edition
August 2020 Bhadrapada 1942

Reprinted
December 2021 Agrahayana 1943
March 2024 Chaitra 1946
July 2025 Shravana 1947
January 2026 Magha 1947

PD 10T HK

© National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2020

₹ 175.00

Printed on 80 GSM paper with NCERT watermark

Published at the Publication Division by the Secretary, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016 and printed at Chandu Press, 469, Patparganj Industrial Estate, Delhi–110092

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

- No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.
- This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise disposed of without the publisher's consent, in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.
- The correct price of this publication is the price printed on this page, Any revised price indicated by a rubber stamp or by a sticker or by any other means is incorrect and should be unacceptable.

OFFICES OF THE PUBLICATION DIVISION, NCERT

NCERT Campus
Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi 110 016 **Phone : 011-26562708**

108, 100 Feet Road
Hosdakere Halli Extension
Banashankari III Stage
Bengaluru 560 085 **Phone : 080-26725740**

Navjivan Trust Building
P.O.Navjivan
Ahmedabad 380 014 **Phone : 079-27541446**

CWC Campus
Opp. Dhankal Bus Stop
Panihati
Kolkata 700 114 **Phone : 033-25530454**

CWC Complex
Maligaon
Guwahati 781 021 **Phone : 0361-2674869**

Publication Team

Head, Publication Division : *M.V. Srinivasan*

Chief Editor : *Bijnan Sutar*

Chief Business Manager : *Amitabh Kumar*

Chief Production Officer (In charge) : *Deepak Jaiswal*

Assistant Production Officer : *Deepak Kumar*

Cover and Layout Design

Ritu Topa

© NCERT not to be republished

Foreword

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), being at the helm of school education in India, has taken the initiative of developing the curriculum and syllabi in different art related areas for higher classes, especially, since the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)–2005 came into practice. There has been a noticeable shift in the development of textbooks, their presentation, interdisciplinary approach, typology of exercises, etc.

The National Education Policy (NEP)–2020, too, recommends that students will be given increased flexibility and a wide choice of subjects to study, particularly, at the secondary school stage, including subjects of art and craft, so that they can design their own paths of study and life plans. Therefore, at the senior secondary stage, which is also the school leaving stage, they should have more options to explore in different fields of higher or professional education.

At this stage of education, emphasis has been laid on professional approach towards the subject of visual or fine arts, making it a discipline rather than only creating awareness and knowledge, which is generic in nature till the secondary classes. The learning objectives also shift towards sharpening of skills in fine arts and developing a perspective in design, instead of free expression and doing arts in the early stages of education. There has been an emphasis on students' expressing themselves in their own language and medium. Also, there has been a need to develop a historical perspective of art in the larger context of the world, as well as, India. Art history is a part of studies in arts and a major area of education, from which the students can learn about the country's rich cultural heritage.

It was observed that many education boards offer visual or fine arts as an optional subject at the senior secondary stage, which includes painting, sculpture, applied arts or commercial arts. These were reviewed and a new syllabus was formed. Since this course apart from the practical component includes theory, which introduces students to the country's diverse historical heritage of

© NCERT not to be republished

art and architecture, this textbook in Fine Arts has been developed for Classes XI and XII.

Our attempt is to bring a comprehensive view of the history of Indian art, and see it chronologically and in continuity with the present day. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions, which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

HRUSHIKESH SENAPATY
Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
August 2020

© NCERT not to be republished

Preface

During the British rule in the nineteenth century, few British colonial officers took active interest in studying India's past in collaboration with Indian scholars, and a systematic study of architectural monuments, sculptures and paintings began in the Indian subcontinent. With the study of religious texts, history of religion was studied and identification of icons, sculptures and paintings was initiated, which became a dominant area of early scholarship.

As the study of art history has grown out of extensive documentations and excavations, one finds description of art objects as a prominent method of study. There are few significant studies of the early twentieth century, where concerns are addressed beyond mere description. Subsequently, several generations of Western and Indian scholars of Indian art history have studied the subject at great depth, making us realise the magnificent past of the Indian civilisation reflected in the architectural monuments, sculptures and paintings. We can claim a distinct Indian approach to the arts of building edifices, sculpture making and language of painting in comparison with the European art on one hand and the far Eastern art on the other. Therefore, the Indian art historical studies have emerged as a prestigious academic discipline at university level education.

Often, the study of art objects is based on two important approaches—formalistic or stylistic analysis and content and contextual studies. The first category involves the study of formalistic characteristics of architecture, sculpture and paintings, whereas, the second concentrates on content analysis, which has several components, such as iconographic study, iconology, narratives and semiotics.

In this series of textbooks for Classes XI and XII, Class XI textbook introduces different visual art forms, such as murals, paintings, sculptures, architecture, etc., from the beginning to the medieval periods. This textbook for Class XII includes chapters on the development of painting traditions in India during the medieval and modern periods.

Considering the level of young generation learners, belonging to the higher secondary stage, the textbook outlines few examples to create an understanding of the nature of developments in Indian art.

There are eight chapters in this textbook and each deals with a particular school or period of painting and other visual arts. The first chapter talks about palm leaf manuscript painting in Western and Eastern India, which serves as a backdrop of further development in various schools of painting, discussed in the following chapters. The second chapter deals with 'The Rajasthani Schools of Painting'. Each school of Rajasthani paintings belongs to a different darbar of

© NCERT not to be republished

a Rajput king and has unique features in its composition, colours, context and depiction of human, as well as, flora and fauna, architecture, etc. The third chapter talks about how the Mughal rule in the Indian subcontinent, in its almost 250 years, brought in a culture from Persia that amalgamated local, as well as, other foreign cultural practices and became indigenous in due course of time. The workmanship had different influences in visual features. The paintings had an array of subjects from historical texts, illustrated biographies, literary and religious manuscripts, epics, study of flora and fauna, ordinary people, etc.

Further down in Deccan provinces, painters and royal patrons developed a unique school of painting that had influences of the Mughal style. However, it was largely related to the regional cultures and heavily influenced by the Persian artistic aesthetics. The Deccani schools have been dealt with in the fourth chapter.

Almost at the same time, Himalyan kingdoms of Rajput kings in Garhwal, Kumayun, Himachal and Jammu regions gave shelter to many artists of Delhi, who beautifully adopted the local features and characters, as well as, subject in their paintings. Chapter five describes the Pahari Schools of Painting. With the crumbling of the Mughal power in northern India and coming in of British and other Europeans as traders and later becoming rulers, Indian identity once again faced the crisis. But at the same time, it absorbed new things, both in content and technique, and came up with new ideas of nationalism. The sixth chapter takes us through the journey of an artistic era with many new developments.

The new Sun of freedom shining on the country's horizon saw different modern trends, which have been highlighted in the seventh chapter. A new definition of individual artistry and experimentation became evident in the post–Independence years till date. The last chapter takes the students through the local living traditions of crafts in the country, practised by various communities over generations, passing on the unique art forms without much change in their spirit.

The textbook also carries a glossary of words and terms used in the chapters. In Bibliography, select references of books have been given, which can be beneficial for the students and teachers. Each chapter is embedded with a Quick Response (QR) code. Besides, there is a single QR code for the entire textbook.

Each chapter is illustrated with representational coloured plates, descriptions and captions. Looking at the captions of the photographs, one can learn that the works of Indian art have been displayed across the continents in numerous museums, galleries and collections. The QR codes take one to many similar visuals and one can explore a plethora of them online at the official websites of these museums.

© NCERT not to be republished

Textbook Development Committee

Chief Advisor

Ratan Parimoo, *Professor* and *Dean* (Retd.), Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat

Advisor

Nuzhat Kazmi, *Dean*, Faculty of Fine Arts, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Members

Komal Pande, *Assistant Curator*, National Museum, New Delhi

Parul Dave Mukharji, *Professor*, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Rita Sodha, *Assistant Professor*, Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat

Member–coordinator

Jyotsna Tiwari, *Professor*, Department of Education in Arts and Aesthetics, NCERT, New Delhi

© NCERT not to be republished

Acknowledgements

The NCERT expresses gratitude towards all people and institutions involved in the development of this textbook. The images used in the textbook have been sourced from various museums and collections, both public and private, located in different parts of the country and abroad. Each image carries a caption, which mentions its details, including source. The following is a list of museums and collections from where the images have been taken.

Aga Khan Museum, Canada
Allahabad Museum, Prayagraj
Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal, Pune
Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi
British Museum, London
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai
Colnaghi Gallery, London
India Office Library, British Library, London
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, USA
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna
Museum für Islamische Kunst (The Museum of Islamic Art), Berlin
N. C. Mehta Gallery, Ahmedabad
National Crafts Museum and Hastakala Academy, New Delhi
National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
National Museum, New Delhi
National Museum, Prague
Nature Morte Gallery, New Delhi
Raja Raghubir Singh Collection, Shangiri, Kullu Valley
The San Diego Museum of Art, California
Smithsonian Institution, Washington D. C.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata
Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan

Thanks are also due to Suchita Raut, *Head*, Department of Arts and Crafts, Delhi Public School, Neelbad, Bhopal; Pragya Verma, *Deputy Secretary* (Academic), Central Board of Secondary Education; Ajit Kumar and Satish Kumar, *Research Scholars*, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; and Preeti Priya, *Junior Project Fellow*, Department of Education in

© NCERT not to be republished

Arts and Aesthetics; for providing support during the textbook development process.

We are also grateful to Shveta Uppal, *Chief Editor*, Publication Division, NCERT, for going through the manuscript and giving her valuable suggestions. Sweta Jha, *Editor* (Contractual), is appreciated for copyediting and finalising the textbook.

Thanks are due to Anita Kumari, Mohammad Atir and Sanjid Ahmad, *DTP Operators* (Contractual), for flawless layout and design.

© NCERT not to be republished

Contents

Foreword *iii*

Preface *v*

1. The Manuscript Painting Tradition 1
2. The Rajasthani Schools of Painting 10
3. The Mughal School of Miniature Painting 35
4. The Deccani Schools of Painting 55
5. The Pahari Schools of Painting 67
6. The Bengal School and Cultural Nationalism 85
7. The Modern Indian Art 99
8. The Living Art Traditions of India 127

Glossary *144*

Bibliography *149*

© NCERT not to be republished

© NCERT not to be republished

GLOSSARY

Academic realism or academic art	A style of painting and sculpture produced under the influence of European academies or universities. In India, it arrived under the aegis of Colonialism, when art academies were established in Calcutta (now, Kolkata), Madras (now, Chennai) and Lahore by the middle of the nineteenth century.
Abstraction and abstract art	The process of taking away or removing characteristics from something in order to reduce it to a set of essential characteristics. Abstract artists exaggerate or simplify forms suggested by the world around them. This form of art is identified with modernism but has existed before it.
Aesthete	A person, who appreciates art and beauty and is sensitive towards it.
Art critic	A person, who specialises in evaluating and critiquing art, art practice and production. The reviews are usually, published in newspapers, magazines, books on websites.
Avant garde	Meaning 'advance guard' or 'vanguard', it refers to people or works that are experimental or innovative, particularly, with respect to art, culture, and politics. It stands for art that does not necessarily accept existing norms of aesthetic or political theories. In India, it has been associated with cultural practices of political radicals and liberal intellects.
Bibliophile	A person who collects and has love for books.
Chiaroscuro	The treatment of light and shade in a drawing or painting.
Colophon page	Consists of a brief statement about the publication of a book—place of publication, name of the publication, date of publication etc.
Community art	Art organised around a community situation. It is characterised by interaction or dialogue with the community. The term came into use in the late 1960s, when it grew as a movement in the United States, Canada, UK, Ireland and Australia. In India, artists like Navjot Altaf and K. P. Soman engaged with it around 2000. They have worked with local communities on social themes like exploitation, the rural–urban divide and caste disparities.
Connoisseur	A person who has immense knowledge in arts, food or drinks and can appreciate the same.

© NCERT not to be republished

Cubism	The Cubist movement was associated with the works of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque done in the year 1907. They were greatly inspired by the traditional African sculpture and the paintings of Paul Cézanne. In cubist artworks, objects are segmented for analysis, where instead of depicting objects from one angle of view, the artist depicts the subject taking a number of viewpoints.
Curators	Traditionally meaning a keeper of a cultural heritage institution (e.g., archive, gallery, library, museum, or garden), in contemporary art, a curator is a person who has to devise a strategy for display of artworks thematically selected. A curator is expected to address the viewing public, and hence, is responsible for writing labels, catalogue, essays and other supporting contents for the exhibition.
Digital artist	Someone who uses digital technology like computer graphics, digital photography and computer assisted painting in the production of art, which has the possibility of mass production of artwork.
Easel painting	A painting executed on portable support, such as a panel or canvas. Its technique dates back to the Egyptian and Roman periods. But with the introduction of oil painting, it became popular in Europe from the thirteenth century.
Etching	Opposite to woodcut, the raised portions of an etching remain blank while the crevices hold the ink. In pure etching, copper, zinc or steel plate is covered with wax or acrylic ground. An artist, then, draws through the ground with a pointed etching needle. The exposed metal lines are, then, etched by dipping the plate in a bath of etchant (e.g., nitric acid or ferric chloride). The etchant 'bites' into the exposed metal, leaving behind lines in the plate. The remaining ground is, then, cleaned off the plate. To make a print, the plate is inked all over, and then, the ink is wiped off the surface, leaving only ink in the etched lines. The plate is, then, put through a high-pressure printing press together with a sheet of paper (often moistened to soften it). The paper picks up the ink from the etched lines, making a print. The process can be repeated many times and several impressions (copies) can be printed.
Expressionism	The term refers to an art that expresses intense emotion. Expressionism is an artistic style, in which an artist attempts to depict the emotional experience rather than physical reality. Expressionists distorted reality through exaggeration, vigorous and visible brushwork and strong colour in order to express their ideas or emotions.

© NCERT not to be republished

Folio	An individual leaf of paper or parchment, either loose as one of the series or forming part of a volume, which is numbered on the front side only.
Foreshortening	Showing or portraying an object to be closer than it actually is or having less depth or distance as an effect of perspective or angle of vision.
Genre	A style or category of art, music or literature.
Gouache	Opaque watercolour is a type of water media, paint consisting of natural pigment, water, a binding agent, and sometimes, additional material. It is an opaque method of painting.
Illusionism	A style, in which artistic representations are made to resemble real objects.
Indigenous art	Arts and the ideas that draw inspiration from one's own past and culture, and traditional practices, which have roots in one's own past.
Installation art	A contemporary art form that does not necessarily break away from conventional media like painting and sculpture but combines most heterogeneous material to transform the perception of space and plasticity. It may use everyday material as also technology like video or internet to create a multi-sensorial impact on viewers and not just visual.
Internationalism	A trend in art that openly embraced art movements from Europe and the United States. Indian artists in the 1950s after Independence aspired to modernism in their practice and qualified as informed partners of world modernists.
Kalam	Style of painting.
Linocut	A relief printing process that makes use of a thin layer of linoleum (can also be mounted on a wooden block) and is easy to cut as it is a soft medium.
Lithography	A technique that emerged by the end of the eighteenth century. A porous surface, normally limestone, is used for making lithographs. The image is drawn on the limestone with a greasy medium. Acid is applied to transfer the grease to the limestone. It leaves the image 'burned' into the surface. Gum Arabic, a substance soluble in water, is then applied, sealing the surface of the stone not covered with the drawing medium.
Mandi	Local market for wholesale trade.

© NCERT not to be republished

Modernism	A phenomenon that modified and changed human lives. It has a universal approach and tries to apply that on all aspects of human life. Since its advent in the last decade of the nineteenth century, modernism would guide the manner in which human thought could process. The concept of modernism, which was largely developed as a philosophy and practice, found its way in colonised non-European countries, America, Africa and Australia.
Mural	An artwork done directly on wall, ceiling or any other large two-dimensional surface. It is one of the oldest formats of art, dating back to the pre-historic caves.
Mysticism	Religious practices with certain ideologue, ethics, rites, myths, legends, magic, etc.
Naturalism	A style and theory of representation based on accurate depiction of detail.
Neem *kalam*	Line drawing.
New media	An art form that creates artworks with new media technologies, such as digital art, computer graphics, virtual art and interactive art technologies, among others. It sees itself in sharp contrast to traditional media arts like painting and sculpture.
Performance art	A phenomenon that happened in the 1970s in the West, when artists wanted to use bodies, often their own to create an artwork. Either their performance was live, enacted before an audience or recorded, and thus, mediated by technology.
Physiognomy	A person's facial features or expressions or general appearance. It refers to an object as well.
Pintadoes	Painted in Spanish (may be on body).
Popular art	An art form possible by technology of reproduction so that multiple copies of art can be accessed by a large number of people. Calendar art is an example. Popular artists belong to high art and show their works in art galleries but adopt themes that relate with everyday life.
Printmaking	The process of making works of art by printing on paper. It is a process of creating prints with an element of originality, rather than just making a photographic reproduction. Prints are created from a single original surface, known as 'matrix'. Each piece produced is not a copy but considered 'an original' since it is not a reproduction of another work of art.
Realism	An artistic movement that emerged in France during mid-nineteenth century.

© NCERT not to be republished

Renaissance art	The style in art (painting, sculpture, decorative arts and architecture) and literature that emerged in Italy (Europe) in about 1400, which revived the features and character of classical antiquity. The revival of European art and architecture under the influence of classical models during the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.
Sfumato	The technique of allowing tones and colour to shade gradually in one another, producing softened outlines or hazy forms.
Video art	Art that uses kinetic images in video format with or without audio data. It emerged during the 1960s and 1970s in the West and became popular in India around 2000.

© NCERT not to be republished

Bibliography

Archer, W. G. 1959. *India and Modern Art*. George Allen and Unwin, London

Beach, Milo Cleveland. 1992. *Mughal and Rajput Painting*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK

Chakraverty, Anjan. 2005. *Indian Miniature Painting*. Roli Books, New Delhi

Craven, Jr. and C. Roy (Ed.). 1990. *Ramayana Pahari Paintings*. Marg Publications, Bombay

Dalmia, Yashodhar. 2001. *The making of modern Indian art — The progressives*. Oxford University Press, New York

Dwivedi, V. P. 1980. *Baramasa — The song of seasons in literature and art*. Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi

Goswamy, B. N. and E. Fischer. 1992. *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India*. Artibus Asiae Publisher Supplementum XXXVIII and Museum Rietberg Zurich, Switzerland

Guru, Asha. 2009. *Modern and Contemporary Indian Art*. Asha Guru, Mumbai

Kramrich, Stella.1975. *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills — A Survey and History of Pahari Miniature Paintings*. Vols. I and II. Oxford University Press, New Delhi

Mago, Pran Nath. 2001. *Contemporary art in India — A perspective*. National Book Trust, New Delhi, India

Mitter, Partha. 1994. *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India (1850–1922)*. Cambridge University Press, England

——. 2001. *Indian Art*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK

——. 2007. *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant Garde (1922–47)*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi

Randhawa, M. S. and John Kenneth Galbraith. 1968. *Indian Painting — The Scene, Themes and Legends*. Oxford and IBH Publishers Co. Calcutta

Randhawa, M. S. 1959. *Basohli Painting*. The Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi

——. 1960. *Kangra Paintings of the Bhagvata Purana*. National Museum, New Delhi

——. 1962. *Kangra Paintings on Love*. National Museum, New Delhi

——. 1971. *Kangra Ragamala Paintings*. National Museum, New Delhi

——. 1972. *Kangra Valley Painting*. The Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi

Sen, Geeti. 2001. *Art in India*. Max Muller Bhawan. New Delhi, India

© NCERT not to be republished

SINHA, GAYATRI. 2003. *Indian Art — An Overview*. Rupa, New Delhi, India

TAGORE, RABINDRANATH. 1997. *Santiniketan: The Making of Contextual Modernism*. National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

ZEBROWSKI, MARK. 1983. *Deccani Painting*. University of California Press. Berkeley

© NCERT not to be republished

NOTES

© NCERT not to be republished

NOTES

© NCERT not to be republished

The Manuscript Painting Tradition 1

The third *Khanda* of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, a fifth century text has a chapter *Chitrasutra*, which should be considered as a source book of Indian art in general and painting specifically. It talks about the art of image making called *pratima lakshana*, which are canons of painting. The *Khanda* also deals with the techniques, tools, material(s), surface (wall), perception, perspective and three-dimentionality of human figures. Different limbs of painting, such as *roopbheda* or looks and appearance; *pramana* or measurments, proportion and structure; *bhava* or expressions; *lavanya yojana* or aesthetic composition; *sadrishya* or resemblance; and *varnikabhanga* or use of brush and colours have been explained at length with examples. Each of these have many sub-sections. These canons were read and understood by artists and followed through centuries, thus, becoming the basis of all styles and schools of painting in India.

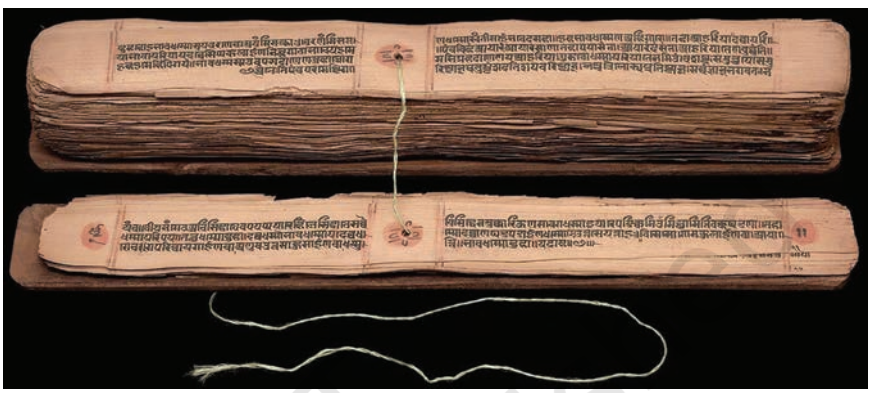
Paintings from the medieval period have earned a generic name, for example miniature paintings, owing to their relatively smaller size. These miniature paintings were hand-held and observed from a closer distance due to their minutiae. The walls of a patron's mansions were often decorated with mural paintings. Hence, these miniatures were never intended to be put up on the walls.

A large section of paintings are appropriately referred to as manuscript illustrations as they are pictorial translations of poetic verses from epics and various canonical, literary, bardic or music texts (manuscripts), with verses handwritten on the topmost portion of the painting in clearly demarcated box–like space. Sometimes, one finds the text not in the front but behind the work of art.

Manuscript illustrations were methodically conceived in thematic sets (each set comprising several loose paintings or folios). Each folio of painting has its corresponding text

© NCERT not to be republished

inscribed either in the demarcated space on the upper portion of the painting or on its reverse. Accordingly, one would have sets of the *Ramayana* paintings, or *Bhagavata Purana*, or *Mahabharata*, or *Gita Govinda*, *Ragamala*, etc. Each set was wrapped up in a piece of cloth and stored as a bundle in the library of the king or patron.



Sravakapratikramasutra-curni of Vijayasimha Mewar, written by Kamalchandra,1260 Collection: Boston

The most important folio-page of the set would be the colophon page, which would furnish information regarding the names of the patron, artist or scribe, date and place of commission or completion of the work, and other such important details.

However, due to ravages of time, the colophon pages have often gone missing, compelling scholars to attribute missing particulars on the basis of their expertise. Being fragile pieces of artworks, paintings are susceptible to mishandling, fire, humidity, and other such calamities and disasters. Considered as precious and valuable artifacts and also being portable, paintings were often gifted to princesses as part of their dowries when they got married. They were also exchanged as gifts between kings and courtiers as acts of gratitude and traded to distant places. Paintings also travelled to remote regions with moving pilgrims, monks, adventurers, traders and professional narrators. Thus, for instance, one would find a Mewar painting with the Bundi king and vice versa.

Reconstructing the history of paintings is a phenomenal task. There are fewer dated sets compared to undated ones. When arranged chronologically, there are vacuous spells in between, where one can only speculate the kind of painting activity that could have thrived. To make matters worse, the loose folios are no longer part of their original sets and are dispersed in various museums and private collections, which

© NCERT not to be republished

keep surfacing time and again, challenging the constituted timeline and compelling scholars to modify and redefine the chronology in history. In this light, undated sets of paintings are ascribed a hypothetical timeframe on the basis of style and other circumstantial evidence.

Western Indian School of Painting

Painting activity that thrived largely in western parts of India constitutes the Western Indian School of Painting with Gujarat as its most prominent centre, and southern parts of Rajasthan and western parts of Central India as other centres. With the presence of some significant ports in Gujarat, there was a network of trade routes passing through these areas, especially, making merchants, traders and local chieftains powerful patrons of art due to the wealth and prosperity that trading brought in. The merchant class, largely represented by the Jain community, led to become significant patrons of themes related to Jainism. Hence, part of the Western Indian School that depicts Jain themes and manuscripts is known as the Jain School of Painting.

Jain painting also received impetus because the concept of *shaastradaan* (donation of books) gained favour amidst the community, where the act of donating illustrated paintings to the monastery's libraries called *bhandars* (repositories) was glorified as a gesture of charity, righteousness and gratitude.

Birth of Mahavir, Kalpasutra, fifteenth century, Jain Bhandar, Rajasthan

Among the most widely illustrated canonical text in the Jain tradition is *Kalpasutra*. It has a section, reciting events from the lives of the 24 Tirthankaras—from their births to salvation—that provides a biographical narrative for artists to paint. The five key incidents roughly elaborated as—conception, birth, renunciation, enlightenment and first sermon, and salvation from the lives of Tirthankaras and

© NCERT not to be republished

Mahavir's mother Trishala dreams about 14 objects when she conceives Mahavir. They are—an elephant, a bull, a tiger, goddess Shri, a *kalash*, a palanquin, a pond, a rivulet, fire, banners, garlands, heap of jewels, the Sun and the moon. She consults an astrologer to interpret her dream and was told that she will give birth to a son, who will either become a sovereign king or a great saint and teacher.

events leading to and around these—comprise most part of the *Kalpasutra*.

Trishala's fourteen dreams, Kalpasutra, Western India

Other popularly painted texts are *Kalakacharyakatha* and *Sangrahini Sutra*, among others. *Kalakacharyakatha* narrates the story of Acharya Kalaka, who is on a mission to rescue his abducted sister (a Jain nun) from an evil king. It recounts various thrilling episodes and adventures of Kalaka, such as him scouring the land to locate his missing sister, demonstrating his magical powers, forging alliances with other kings, and lastly, battling the evil king.

Uttaradhyana Sutra contains the teachings of Mahavir that prescribe the code of conduct that monks should follow and *Sangrahini Sutra* is a cosmological text composed in the twelfth century that comprises concepts about the structure of the universe and mapping of space.

Jains got these texts written in numerous copies. They were either sparsely or profusely illustrated with paintings. Hence, one typical folio or painting would be divided into sections with allocated spaces for writing the text and painting

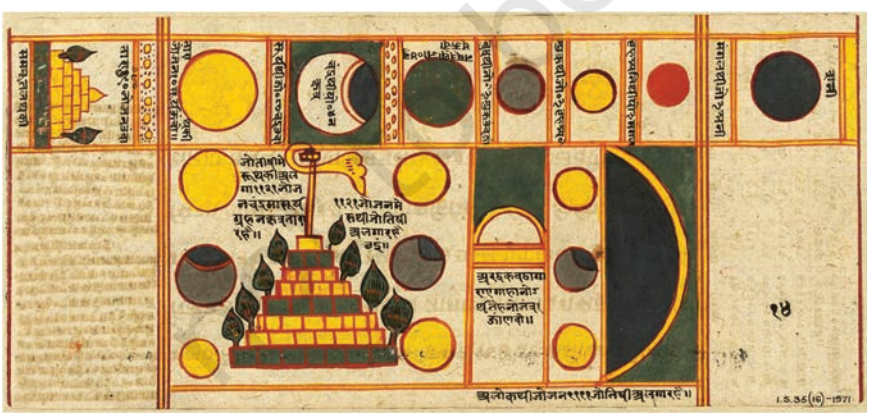
© not to be republished

Kalaka is seen on the lower right and his captive sister is depicted towards the top left. The donkey with magical powers is spewing arrows at Kalaka's army of kings. The evil king presides from the inside the circular fort.

Kalakacharyakatha
1497, N. C. Mehta Collection,
Ahmedabad, Gujarat

what is written. A small hole in the centre was created for a string to pass through to fasten the pages together that were in turn protected with wooden covers called *patlis*, placed on top and bottom of the manuscript.

Early Jain paintings were traditionally done on palm leaves before paper was introduced in the fourteenth century and the earliest surviving palm leaf manuscript from the western part of India dates back to the eleventh century. The palm leaves were adequately treated before painting and the writing was etched upon the leaves with a sharp calligraphic device.



Planetary bodies and the distance between them, Sangrahini Sutra, seventeenth centrury, N. C. Mehta Collection, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Owing to the narrow and small space on palm leaves, painting, initially, was largely confined to *patlis* that were liberally painted in bright colours with images of gods and goddesses, and incidents from the lives of Jain acharyas.

© NCERT not to be republished

Jain paintings developed a schematic and simplified language for painting, often dividing the space into sections to accommodate different incidents. One observes a penchant for bright colours and deep interest in depiction of textile patterns. Thin, wiry lines predominate the composition and three-dimensionality of the face is attempted with an addition of a further eye. Architectural elements, revealing the Sultanate domes and pointed arches, indicate the political presence of Sultans in the regions of Gujarat, Mandu, Jaunpur and Patan, among others, where these paintings were done. Several indigenous features and local cultural lifestyle is visible through textile canopies and wall hangings, furniture, costumes, utilitarian things, etc. Features of the landscape are only suggestive, and usually, not detailed. A period of roughly hundred years from about 1350–1450 appears to be the most creative phase for Jain paintings. One observes a shift from severely iconic representations to inclusion of attractively depicted aspects of landscape, figures in dance poses, musicians playing instruments, which are painted in the margins of the folio around the main episode.

Indra praising
Devasano Pado, Kalpasutra,
Gujarat, about 1475.
Collection: Boston

These paintings were lavishly painted with profuse use of gold and lapis lazuli, indicating the wealth and social status of their patrons.

Over and above these canonical texts, *Tirthipatas*, *Mandalas* and secular, non-canonical stories were also painted for the Jain community.

Besides Jain paintings that were patronised by rich merchants and dedicated devotees, a parallel tradition of painting existed amongst feudal lords, wealthy citizens and other such people during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that encompassed illustrations of secular, religious and literary themes. This style represents the indigenous

© NCERT not to be republished

tradition of painting before the formulation of court styles of Rajasthan and intermingling of Mughal influences.

A large group of works of the same period, portraying Hindu and Jain subjects, such as the *Mahapurana*, *Chaurpanchashika*, *Aranyaka Parvan* of the *Mahabharata*, *Bhagvata Purana*, *Gita Govinda*, and few others are representative of this indigenous style of painting. This phase and style is also casually referred to as pre-Mughal or pre-Rajasthani, which is largely synonymous with the term 'indigenous style'.

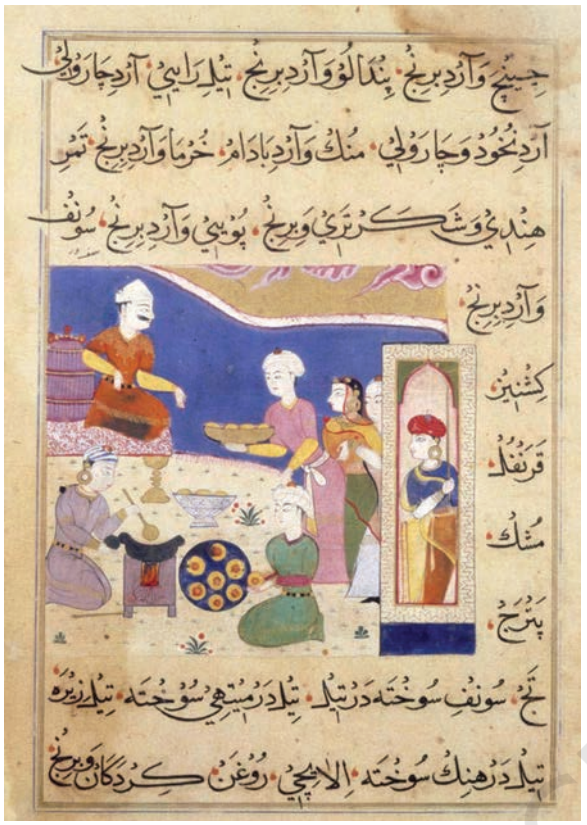
Chaurpanchasika,
Gujarat,
fifteenth century,
N. C. Mehta Collection,
Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Distinctive stylistic features evolved during this phase and with this group of paintings. A particular figure type evolved with an interest in depicting transparency of fabrics—*odhnis* 'ballooned' over the head of heroines and draped with stiff and standing edges. Architecture was contextual but suggestive. Different kind of hatchings evolved for depiction of water bodies and particular ways of representing the horizon, flora, fauna, etc., got formalised. All these formal elements make their way in the seventeenth century early Rajasthani paintings.

Mitharam,
Bhagvata Purana, 1550

With several regions in the north, east and west coming under the rule of the Sultanate dynasties from Central Asia after the late twelfth century, another strain of influence—

© NCERT not to be republished



Nimatnama, Mandu, 1550, British Library, London

Persian, Turkic and Afghan—percolated into the mainland and appeared in the paintings patronised by the Sultans of Malwa, Gujarat, Jaunpur and such other centres. With few Central Asian artists in these courts working with local artists, an intermingling of Persian features and indigenous styles led to the emergence of another style that is referred to as the Sultanate School of Painting.

This represents more of a 'style' than a 'school' that has a hybrid Persian influence—indigenous pictorial style, which is an interesting coming together of indigenous features as described earlier and Persian elements, such as colour palette, physiognomy, simplified landscape with decorative details, etc.

Nimatnama (Book of Delicacies) the most representative example of this school was painted at Mandu during the reign of Nasir Shah Khalji (1500–1510 CE). It is a book of recipes with a section on hunting, and also has methods for preparation of medicines, cosmetics, perfumes and directions on their use.

Stories with undertones of Sufi ideas were also gaining favour and *Laurchanda* paintings are example of this genre.

Pala School of Painting

Like the Jain texts and paintings, the illustrated manuscripts of the Palas of eastern India also form the earliest examples of paintings from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Pala period (750 CE to the mid–twelfth century) saw the last great phase of Buddhist art in India. Monasteries, such as Nalanda and Vikramsila were great centres of Buddhist learning, and art and numerous manuscripts were illustrated here with Buddhist themes and images of *Vajrayana* Buddhist deities on palm leaves.

These centres also had workshops for casting of bronze images. Students and pilgrims from all over South East Asia came to these monasteries for education and religious instruction, and took back specimens of Pala Buddhist art in the form of bronze and illustrated manuscripts.

© NCERT not to be republished

Lokeshvar, Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita,
Pala, 1050, National Museum, New Delhi

This practice enabled the dispersal of Pala art to places, such as Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Sri Lanka and Java.

Unlike the terse lines of Jain painting, a flowing and sinuous line in subdued colour tones characterises Pala paintings. Like at Ajanta, the sculptural styles of Pala at monasteries and the painterly images have a similar language. A fine example of a Pala Buddhist palm leaf manuscript is *Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita* (Bodleian Library, Oxford) or the 'Perfection of Wisdom' written in eight thousand lines.

Painted at the monastery of Nalanda in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Pala King, Ramapala, in the last quarter of the eleventh century, it has six pages of illustrations and wooden covers painted on both sides.

Pala dynasty weakened with the coming of Muslim invaders. Pala art came to an end in the first half of the thirteenth century when the Muslim invaders attacked and caused destruction to the monasteries.

EXERCISE

1. What are manuscript paintings? Name two places, where the tradition of manuscript painting was prevalent?
2. Take a chapter from any one of our language textbooks and make an illustrated folio with selected text (in minimum five pages).

© NCERT not to be republished

The Rajasthani Schools of Painting 2

12144CH02

The term 'Rajasthani Schools of Painting' pertains to the schools of painting that prevailed in the princely kingdoms and *thikanas* of what roughly constitutes Rajasthan and parts of Madhya Pradesh in the present time, such as Mewar, Bundi, Kota, Jaipur, Bikaner, Kishangarh, Jodhpur (Marwar), Malwa, Sirohi and other such principalities largely between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Scholar Anand Coomaraswamy in 1916 coined the term 'Rajput Paintings' to refer to these as most rulers and patrons of these kingdoms were Rajputs. He, specifically, coined it to categorise and differentiate this group from the much known Mughal School of Painting. Therefore, Malwa, comprising princedoms of Central India, and the Pahari Schools that comprises the *pahari* or mountainous Himalayan region of north-western India was also in the ambit of Rajput Schools. For Coomaraswamy, the nomenclature represented the indigenous tradition of painting prevalent in the mainland before the conquest by the Mughals. Studies in Indian paintings have come a long way since then and the term 'Rajput Schools' is obsolete. Instead, specific categories, such as Rajasthani and Pahari are employed.

Though separated by short distances, the pictorial styles that emerged and evolved in these kingdoms were significantly diverse in terms of either execution—fine or bold; preference of colours (brilliant or gentle); compositional elements (depiction of architecture, figures and nature); modes of narration; affinity for naturalism—or had emphasis on extreme mannerism.

Paintings were painted on waslis—layered, thin sheets of handmade papers glued together to get the desired thickness. The outline was sketched on waslis in black or brown followed by colours fixed therein by brief notations or sample patches. Colour pigments were predominantly obtained from minerals and precious metals like gold and silver that were mixed with glue as the binding medium. Camel and squirrel

© NCERT not to be republished

hair were used in brushes. On completion, the painting was burnished with an agate to lend it a uniform sheen and an appealing resplendence.

The painting activity was a kind of teamwork, with the master artist composing and doing preliminary drawings, followed by pupils or experts of colouring, portraiture, architecture, landscape, animals, etc., taking over and doing their bit, and finally, the master artist putting the finishing touches. The scribe would write the verse in the space left for the one.

Themes of Paintings – An Overview

By the sixteenth century, Vaishvanism in the cults of Rama and Krishna had become popular in many parts of western, northern and central India as part of the Bhakti movement that had swept the entire Indian subcontinent. Krishna had a special appeal. He was not only worshipped as God but also as an ideal lover. The notion of 'love' was cherished as a religious theme, where a delightful synthesis of sensuousness and mysticism was perceived. Krishna was perceived as the

Krishna and gopis in the forest, Gita Govinda, Mewar, 1550, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai

© NCERT not to be republished

creator from whom all creation was a sportive emanation, and Radha, the human soul who led to offer herself to God. The soul's devotion to the deity is pictured by Radha's self-abandonment to her beloved Krishna epitomised in *Gita Govinda* paintings.

Composed in the twelfth century by Jayadeva, who is believed to have been the court poet of Lakshmana Sen of Bengal, *Gita Govinda*, the 'Song of the Cowherd', is a lyrical poem in Sanskrit, evoking *shringara rasa*, portraying the mystical love between Radha and Krishna through worldly imageries. Bhanu Datta, a Maithil Brahmin who lived in Bihar in the fourteenth century, composed another favourite text of artists, *Rasamanjari*, interpreted as the 'Bouquet of Delight'. Written in Sanskrit, the text is a treatise on *rasa* and deals with the classification of heroes (*nayakas*) and heroines (*nayikas*) in accordance with their age — *baal*, *taruna* and *praudha*; physiognomic traits of appearance, such as *padmini*, *chitrini, shankhini*, *hastini*, etc., and emotional states, such as *khandita*, *vasaksajja*, *abhisarika*, *utka,* etc. Though Krishna is not mentioned in the text, painters have introduced him as the archetypal lover.

Rasikapriya, translated as 'The Connoisseur's Delight', is replete with complex poetic interpretations and was composed to incite aesthetic pleasure to elite courtiers. Composed in Brajbhasha by Keshav Das, the court poet of Raja Madhukar Shah of Orchha in 1591, *Rasikapriya* explores various emotive states, such as love, togetherness, jilt, jealousy, quarrel and its aftermath, separation, anger, etc., that are common between lovers represented through the characters of Radha and Krishna.

Kavipriya, another poetic work by Keshav Das, was written in the honour of Rai Parbin, a celebrated courtesan of Orchha. It is a tale of love and its tenth chapter evocatively titled *Baramasa* engages with the most enduring climactic description of the 12 months of the year. While illustrating the daily life of people in different seasons and alluding to festivals falling therein, Keshav Das describes how the *nayika* prevails upon the *nayaka* not to leave her and proceed on a journey.

Bihari Satsai, authored by Bihari Lal, constituting 700 verses (*satsai*), is composed in the form of aphorisms and moralising witticism. It is largely held that he composed the *Satsai* around 1662 while he was at the court of Jaipur

© NCERT not to be republished

working for Mirza Raja Jai singh as the patron's name appears in several verses of the *Satsai*. The *Satsai* has been largely painted at Mewar and less frequently in the Pahari School.

Ragamala paintings are pictorial interpretations of *ragas* and *raginis*.

Ragas are traditionally envisioned in divine or human form in romantic or devotional contexts by musicians and poets. Each *raga* is associated with a specific mood, time of the day and season. *Ragamala* paintings are arranged in albums invariably containing 36 or 42 folios, organised in the format of families. Each family is headed by a male *raga*, having six female consorts called *raginis*. The six main *ragas* are *Bhairava*, *Malkos*, *Hindol*, *Dipak*, *Megha* and *Shri*.

Bardic legends and other romantic tales, such as *Dhola-Maru*, *Sohni-Mahiwal*, *Mrigavat*, *Chaurpanchashika* and *Laurchanda* just to mention a few were other favourite themes. Texts, such as the *Ramayana*, *Bhagvata Purana*, *Mahabharata*, *Devi Mahatmya* and the like were favourites with all schools of painting.

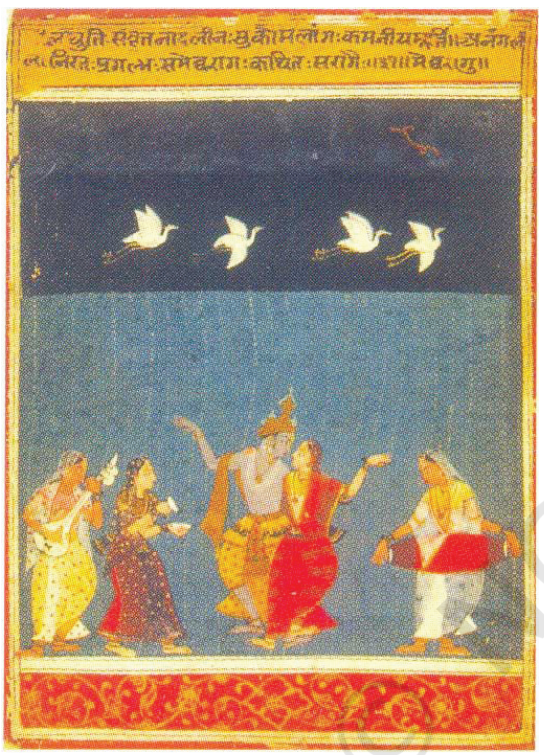
Moreover, a large number of paintings record *darbar* scenes and historic moments; depict hunting expeditions, wars and victories; picnics, garden parties, dance and music performances; rituals, festivals and wedding processions; portraits of kings, courtiers and their families; city views; birds and animals.

Chaurpanchasika, Mewar, 1500, N. C. Mehta Collection, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

© NCERT not to be republished

Malwa School of Painting

The Malwa School flourished between 1600 and 1700 CE and is most representative of the Hindu Rajput courts. Its two-dimensional simplistic language appears as a consummation of stylistic progression from the Jain manuscripts to the *Chaurpanchashika* manuscript paintings.



Raga Megha,
Madho Das, Malwa, 1680,
National Museum, New Delhi

Unlike the specificity of Rajasthani schools that emerged and flourished in precise territorial kingdoms and courts of their respective kings, Malwa School defies a precise centre for its origin and instead suggests a vast territory of Central India, where it got articulated with a sporadic mention of few places, such as Mandu, Nusratgarh and Narsyang Sahar. Among the few early dated sets are an illustrated poetic text of *Amaru Shataka* dated 1652 CE and a *Ragamala* painting by Madho Das in 1680 CE. A large number of Malwa paintings discovered from the Datia Palace collection supports a claim for Bundelkhand as the region of painting. But the mural paintings in the Datia Palace of Bundelkhand defy an obvious Mughal influence, which is contrary to the works on paper that are stylistically inclined towards indigenous two-dimensional austerity. A complete absence of the mention of patron kings and also portraits in this school supports a view that these paintings were bought by the Datia rulers from travelling artists, who carried paintings on popular themes, such as the *Ramayana*, *Bhagvata Purana*, *Amaru Shataka*, *Rasikapriya*, *Ragamala* and *Baramasa,* among others.

The Mughal School dominates the scene from the sixteenth century through the courts of Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore. Provincial Mughal Schools prospered in many parts of the country, which were under the Mughals but headed by powerful and wealthy governors appointed by Mughal emperors, where pictorial language evolved through an amalgamation of Mughal and eccentric local elements. The Deccani School flourished in centres, such as Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golconda and Hyderabad from the sixteenth century. The Rajasthani Schools came into prominence in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, with the Pahari School following in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

© NCERT not to be republished

Mewar School of Painting

Mewar is conjectured to be a significant early centre of painting in Rajasthan, from where, hypothetically, one would have been able to formalise a continuous stylistic tradition of painting—from pre-seventeenth century bold, indigenous styles to the subsequent refined and finer style post Karan Singh's contact with the Mughals. However, long wars with the Mughals have wiped out most early examples.

Therefore, the emergence of the Mewar School is widely associated with an early dated set of *Ragamala* paintings painted at Chawand in 1605 by an artist named Nisardin. The set has a colophon page that reveals the above vital information. This set shares its visual aesthetics and has close affinity with the pre-seventeenth century painting style in its direct approach, simpler compositions, sporadic decorative details and vibrant colours.

The reign of Jagat Singh I (1628–1652) is recognised as the period when pictorial aesthetics got reformulated under virtuoso artists Sahibdin and Manohar, who added new vitality to the style and vocabulary of Mewar paintings. Sahibdin painted the *Ragamala* (1628), *Rasikapriya*, *Bhagvata Purana* (1648) and the *Yuddha Kanda* of *Ramayana* (1652), a folio of

Yuddha Kanda of Ramayana, Sahibdin, Mewar, 1652, India Office Library, London

© NCERT not to be republished

Maharana Jagat Singh II of Mewar hawking, 1744, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

which is discussed here. Manohar's most significant work is that of *Bal Kanda* of *Ramayana* (1649). Another exceptionally gifted artist, Jagannath, painted the *Bihari Satsai* in 1719, which remains a unique contribution of the Mewar School. Other texts like *Harivamsha* and *Sursagar* were also illustrated in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Attributed to ingenious artist Sahibdin, *Yuddha Kanda*, the Book of Battles, is a chapter in the *Ramayana* set of paintings, popularly referred to as the *Jagat Singh Ramayana*. Dated 1652, Sahibdin, herein, has crafted a novel pictorial device that of oblique aerial perspective to impart credibility to the ambitious scale that war pictures encompass. Deploying various narrative techniques, he either layers several episodes into a single painting as this one, or spreads a single episode over more than one folio. This painting portrays Indrajit's devious tactics and use of magic weapons in war.

Painting in the eighteenth century increasingly slithered away from textual representations to courtly activities and pastime of the royals. Mewar artists, generally, prefer a bright colour palette with prominent reds and yellows.

© NCERT not to be republished

Nathdwara, a town close to Udaipur and a prominent *Vaishnava* centre, also emerged as a school of painting in the late seventeenth century. Large backdrops called *pichhwais* were painted on cloth for the deity, Shrinathji, for several festive occasions.

Mewar painting in the eighteenth century increasingly became secular and courtly in ambience. Not only an increasing fascination for portraiture emerged but outsized and flamboyant court scenes, hunting expeditions, festivals, *zenana* activities, sports, etc., were largely favoured as subjects.

A folio depics Maharana Jagat Singh II (1734–1752) touring the countryside while on his way hawking. The country scape perceived in an oblique view, with the horizon raised at a tangent in comparison to the foreground enables the artist to visualise a panoramic view of limitless vision. The relevance of the scene lies in its complexity of narration that also aims at reportage.

Krishna as Shrinathji celebrating the festival of Sarad Purnima, Nathdwara, 1800, National Museum, New Delhi

Bundi School of Painting

A prolific and distinct school of painting flourished in Bundi in the seventeenth century, which is remarkable for its unblemished colour sense and excellent formal design.

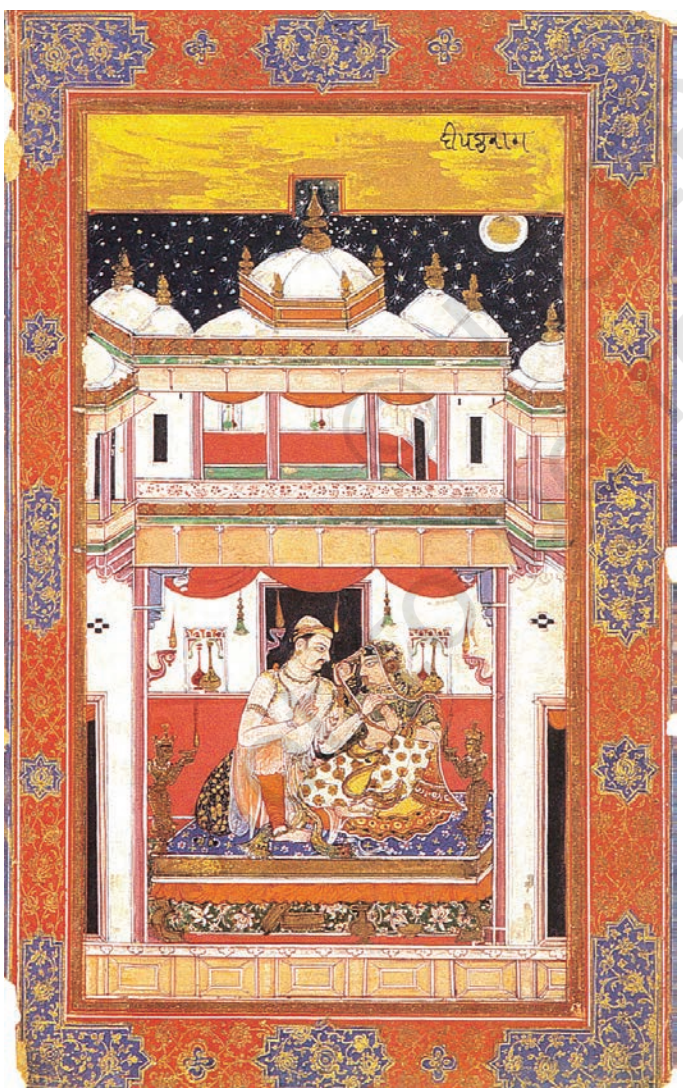
Bundi Ragamala dated 1591, assigned to the earliest and formative phase of Bundi painting, has been painted at Chunar in the reign of Bhoj Singh (1585–1607), the Hada Rajput ruler.

The Bundi school blossomed under the patronage of two rulers—Rao Chattar Sal (1631–1659), who was made the governor of Delhi by Shahjahan and played a conspicuous role in the subjugation of the Deccan; and his son Rao Bhao Singh (1659–1682), who was an enthusiastic, self-indulging patron as revealed from numerous portraits that he commissioned of himself and other dated works. Innovative developments have been observed under the reigns of his successors Aniruddha Singh (1682–1702) and Budh Singh, whose whiskered face is visible in many portraits. Despite numerous political disputes and having lost his kingdom four times, he is known to have encouraged the art of painting.

© NCERT not to be republished

Painting activity entered its most accomplished phase albeit for a short time during the long reign of Budh Singh's son, Umed Singh (1749–1771), where it acquired refinement in minuteness of details. Bundi paintings during the eighteenth century appear to have imbibed Deccani aesthetics, such as love for bright and vivid colours.

Umed Singh's successor Bishen Singh (1771–1821) ruled Bundi for 48 years and was a connoisseur of art. He had a keen interest in hunting, and him hunting wild animals frequently figures in the paintings of his period. Under his successor Ram Singh (1821–1889), the *chitrashalain* of the Bundi palace was decorated with mural paintings of royal processions, hunting scenes and episodes of Krishna's story. Last stages of painting at Bundi are best exemplified by several wall paintings in the palace.



Raga Dipak, Chunar Ragamala, Bundi, 1519, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

A distinct feature of Bundi and Kota School is a keen interest in the depiction of lush vegetation; picturesque landscape with varied flora, wildlife and birds; hills and thick jungles; and water bodies. It also has a series of fine equestrian portraits. The drawing of elephants is, particularly, unsurpassed in both Bundi and Kota. Bundi artists had their own standards of feminine beauty—women are petite with round faces, receding foreheads, sharp noses, full cheeks, sharply penciled eyebrows and a 'pinched' waist.

Bundi's earliest phase of painting, *Bundi Ragamala* bears an inscription in Persian that dates back to 1591, mentions names of its artists—Shaykh Hasan, Shaykh Ali and Shaykh Hatim, who introduce themselves as pupils of master artists, Mir Sayyid Ali and Khwaja Abddus Samad of the Mughal court. They mention Chunar (near Benaras) as the place of origin of the painting, where Rao Bhoj Singh and his father Rao Surjan Singh maintained a palace.

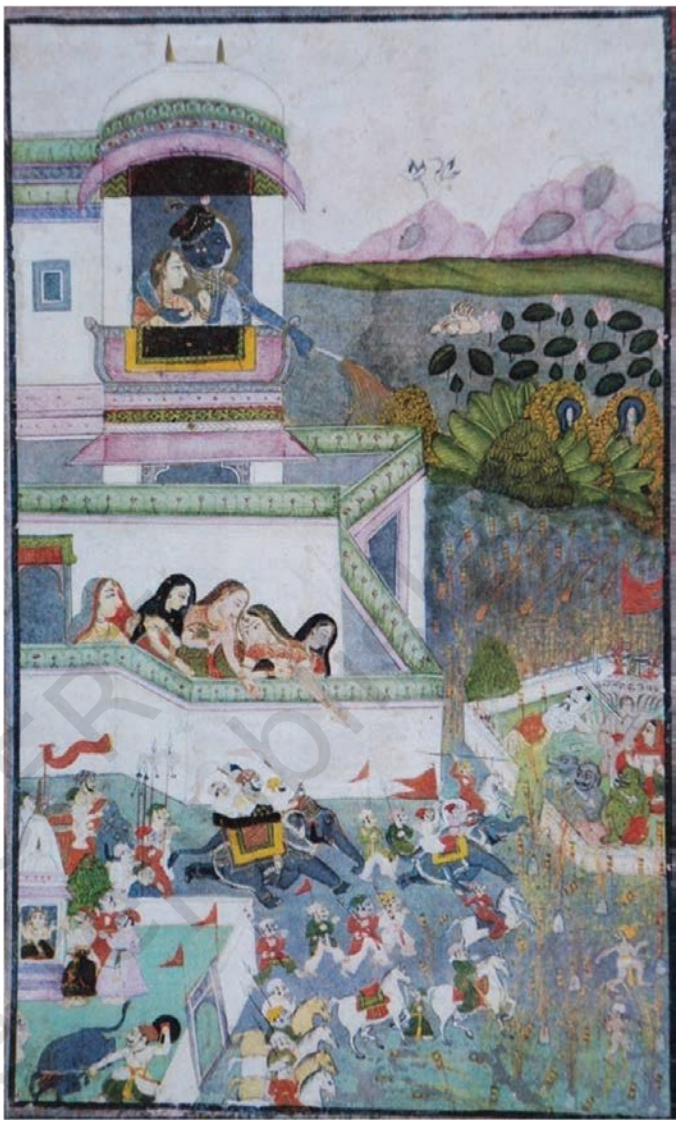
Amongst the surviving few folios of the Chunar set are *Raginis Khambavati*,

© NCERT not to be republished

Bilaval, *Malashri*, *Bhairavi*, *Patmanjari* and few others.

Raga Dipak is portrayed in a night setting, seated with his beloved in a chamber that is warmly illuminated by flames from the four lamps; two lamp holders are innovatively shaped like ornate human figures. The sky is glittering with innumerable stars and the moon is turning yellow, indicating that it is not newly risen but that the night has progressed and many hours have passed by for the couple in each other's company.

One may observe in this painting that the finial on the domical structure of the palace protrudes into the yellow patch reserved for writing and except for the label of *Dipak Raga* nothing else is written. This gives an insight into the process of painting and one discerns that the painting was, usually, finished before it was passed on to scribe for the verse to be written. In this case, the verse was never written and the label was more of an indication to the artist as to what he should be painting.



Ashwin, Baramasa, Bundi, seventeenth century, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai

Baramasa is a popular theme of Bundi paintings. As mentioned earlier, it is an atmospheric description of the 12 months by Keshav Das that is part of the tenth chapter of *Kavipriya* written for Rai Parbin, a celebrated courtesan of Orchha.

Kota School of Painting

The accomplished tradition of painting at Bundi gave rise to one of the most outstanding Rajasthani Schools, Kota, which excels in the depiction of hunting scenes and reflects an exceptional excitement and obsession for animal chase.

Bundi and Kota were parts of the same kingdom till 1625 when Jahangir divided the Bundi empire and awarded one part to Madhu Singh, the younger son of Rao Ratan Singh (son of Bhoj Singh of Bundi), for his bravery in defending him

© NCERT not to be republished

Maharaja Ram Singh I of Kota hunting lions at Mukundgarh, 1695, Colnaghi Gallery, London

against his son Prince Khurram's (Shah Jahan) rebellion in Deccan.

After its separation from Bundi, Kota had its own school, commencing around 1660s in the reign of Jagat Singh (1658–1683). In the early period, the paintings of Bundi and Kota cannot be distinguished for several decades as Kota painters borrowed from the Bundi repertoire. Some compositions were taken verbatim from Bundi pictures. However, there is an attitude of non–conformity apparent in figural and architectural exaggerations. With Kota flair for drawing superseding in the following decades, Kota style of painting becomes strikingly individual.

By the reign of Ram Singh I (1686–1708), artists had passionately enlarged their inventory to a large variety of subjects. Kota artists seem to have been the first to render landscape as the real subject of compositions. Umed Singh (1770–1819) acceded to the throne at the age of 10 years. But his powerful regent Zalim Singh arranged for the young king to be amused with hunting while he governed the affairs of the state. Umed Singh, thus, occupied himself with wildlife and gaming from an early age and spent most of his time in hunting expeditions. Paintings served as flattering records of his exploits. Kota painting of this period reflects obsession with the chase, which became a social ritual, in which even women of the court participated.

Kota paintings are characteristically spontaneous, calligraphic in execution and emphasise on marked shading, especially, the double–lid eye. Artists of the Kota School excelled in rendering animals and combat.

Bikaner School of Painting

Rao Bika Rathore established one of the most prominent kingdoms of Rajasthan, Bikaner, in 1488. During his regime, Anup Singh (1669–1698) instituted a library in Bikaner that became a repository of manuscripts and paintings. As a result of long association with the Mughals, Bikaner developed a

© NCERT not to be republished

distinctive language of painting that was influenced by the Mughal elegance and subdued colour palette.

According to inscriptional evidence, several master artists of the Mughal atelier visited and worked in Bikaner in the seventeenth century. Karan Singh had employed Ustad Ali Raza, who was a master painter from Delhi. His earliest work represents the beginnings of Bikaner School, which can be dated back to around 1650.

In the reign of Anup Singh, Ruknuddin (whose ancestors came from the Mughal court) was the master artist, whose style was an amalgamation of the indigenous idiom with Deccani and Mughal conventions. He painted significant texts, such as the *Ramayana*, *Rasikapriya* and *Durga Satpsati*. Ibrahim, Nathu, Sahibdin and Isa were other well-known painters in his atelier.

A prevailing practice in Bikaner was to set up studios called *Mandi*, where a group of artists worked under the supervision of a master artist. From inscriptions, it can be gathered that Ruknuddin, Ibrahim and Nathu managed some of these professional studios. Several *Mandis* existed

Krishna supporting Mount Govardhan by Shahadin, Bikaner, 1690, British Museum, London

© NCERT not to be republished

Krishna playing Flute surrounded by Cows, Bikaner, 1777, National Museum, New Delhi

in Anup Singh's reign. On the completion of a painting, the court archivist entered the name of the master artist and the date behind the painting. This practice resulted in the name of the master artist being inscribed on works of his pupils, who may not be painting in the same style as the master. However, it becomes evident from these entries that the master artist would occasionally put finishing touches to the paintings. The term used for this was *gudarayi*, literally meaning to 'lift'. Apart from its activities of making new miniatures, the studio was entrusted with the task of *marammat* or repairing and making *nakals* (copies) of older works.

The custom of having portraits of artists is unique to the Bikaner School and most of them are inscribed with information regarding their ancestry. They are referred to as *Ustas* or *Ustad*. Ruknuddin painted exquisite works in soft colour tones. Ibrahim's works have a misty dreamlike quality. His figures are dainty with heavily modeled faces. His studio appears to be most prolific as his name occurs on different sets of *Baramasa*, *Ragamala* and *Rasikapriya*.

Accounts from the *Bahis*, royal archival day-to-day diaries, and numerous inscriptions on Bikaner paintings make it one of the best documented schools of painting. Inscriptions in Marwari, and occasionally, Persian reveal the names of artists and dates, and in some cases, even the place of production and occasions for which the works were commissioned.

Kishangarh School of Painting

Widely held among the most stylised of all Rajasthani miniatures, Kishangarh paintings are distinguished by their exquisite sophistication and distinct facial type exemplified by arched eyebrows, lotus petal shaped eyes slightly tinged with pink, having drooping eyelids, a sharp slender nose and thin lips.

Kishan Singh, one of the sons of the king of Jodhpur, founded the state of Kishangarh in 1609. By the mid–seventeenth century under the patronage of Man Singh

© NCERT not to be republished

Krishna and Radha in a pavilion, Nihal Chand, Kishangarh, 1750, Allahabad Museum

(1658–1706), artists were already working in the Kishangarh court. A distinctive style of the state with a general tendency to elongate the human form, making lavish use of green and penchant for depicting panoramic landscapes had evolved by the early eighteenth century during the reign of Raj Singh (1706–1748). With Raj Singh getting initiated into the Pushtimargiya cult of Vallabhacharya, *Krishna Lila* themes became personal favourites for the rulers of Kishangarh and represented a major portion of their court art.

Sawant Singh's most celebrated and outstanding artist was Nihal Chand. Nihal Chand worked for Sawant Singh between 1735 and 1757, and composed paintings on Sawant Singh's poetry that portrayed the theme of divine lovers—Radha and Krishna, in courtly surroundings, often appearing tiny in the vastness and minutiae of their panoramic landscape settings. Kishangarh artists reveled in the depiction of vistas in accentuated colours.

Jodhpur School of Painting

With the political presence of Mughals since the sixteenth century, influence of their visual aesthetics made its way in the style of portraiture and depiction of court scenes, etc. However, the formidable indigenous folkish style was so widespread and deeply embedded in culture that it resisted getting overpowered and prevailed in most illustrated sets of paintings. One of the earliest sets painted in Pali is a *Ragamala* set by artist Virji in 1623.

© NCERT not to be republished

Dhola and Maru, Jodhpur, 1810, National Museum, New Delhi

A productive period of painting was ushered in by Maharaja Jaswant Singh (1638–1678) in the mid–seventeenth century. A trend for documentary painting through portraiture and depiction of court life started under his patronage around 1640 and enjoyed prominence till the advent of photography in the nineteenth century when it substituted painting for recording events. Numerous portraits of Jaswant Singh survive. Due to his inclination towards the Vallabha cult of Shrinathji, he patronised many Krishna related themes with *Bhagvata Purana* as the most prominent one.

His successor Ajit Singh (1679–1724) became the king after 25 years of war with Aurangzeb, which was fought by legendary warrior Veer Durgadas Rathore, who successfully recaptured Marwar. Durgadas and his heroism got popularly celebrated in poems and court paintings of Ajit Singh's period. Durgadas's equestrian (horse riding) portraits became popular.

The last phase innovative of Jodhpur painting coincided with the reign of Man Singh (1803–1843). Significant sets painted during his time are the *Ramayana* (1804), *Dhola-Maru*, *Panchatantra* (1804) and *Shiva Purana*. *Ramayana* paintings are interesting as the artist has employed his understanding of Jodhpur to depict Rama's Ayodhya. Hence, one gets an inkling into the bazaars, lanes, gateways, etc., of Jodhpur during that period. This is true for all schools, wherein, local architecture, costumes and cultural aspects get interwoven with the stories of Krishna, Rama and others, and get depicted in paintings.

Man Singh was the follower of the Nath Sampradaya and paintings of him in the company of the Nath gurus survive. Also, a set of *Nath Charita* (1824) was painted.

Inscriptions behind Marwar paintings do not reveal much information regarding the painting until the nineteenth century. Seldom, dates are inscribed, and even more rarely, the names of artists and place of painting find a mention.

© NCERT not to be republished

Jaipur School of Painting

The Jaipur School of painting originated in its former capital Amer, which was nearest of all large Rajput states to Mughal capitals—Agra and Delhi. Rulers of Jaipur from the earliest times maintained cordial relations with the Mughal emperors, who strongly influenced the aesthetics at Amer. Raja Bharmal (1548–1575) married his daughter to Akbar. His son Bhagwant Das (1575–1592) was a close friend of Akbar and his son Man Singh, in turn, was Akbar's most trusted general.

Sawai Jai Singh (1699–1743), an influential ruler, established a new capital city Jaipur named after him in 1727 and shifted from Amer. Jaipur School of paintings thrived under his reign and emerged as a well-defined independent school. Court records reveal that some Mughal painters were brought from Delhi to become a part of his atelier. He also invited eminent craftsmen and other artists to settle down in Jaipur and reorganised the *Suratkhana*, the place where paintings were made and stored. He was drawn to the Vaishnavite sect and commissioned numerous

The Hour of Godhuli, Jaipur, 1780, National Museum, New Delhi

© NCERT not to be republished

paintings on the theme of Radha and Krishna. Artists during his reign painted sets based on *Rasikapriya*, *Gita Govinda*, *Baramasa* and *Ragamala*, where the hero's figure is in striking resemblance with the king. Portrait painting was also popular during his time and an accomplished portrait painter, Sahibram, was part of his atelier. Muhammad Shah was another artist.

Sawai Ishwari Singh (1743–1750) extended the same patronage to art. Apart from religious and literary texts, he got scenes of his leisure pursuits painted, such as elephant rides, boar and tiger hunts, elephant fights, and so on. Sawai Madho Singh (1750–1767) was attracted towards getting incidents of his court life recorded.

It was only in the eighteenth century, under the aspiration of Sawai Pratap Singh (1779–1803) that the predominant Mughal influence receded and a Jaipur style with reformulated aesthetics, which was a blend of Mughal and indigenous stylistic features emerged. This was a second thriving period for Jaipur and Pratap Singh employed around 50 artists. He was a scholar, poet, prolific writer and an ardent follower of Krishna. During his time, apart from royal portraits and representations of courtly pomp and splendour, literary and religious themes, such as *Gita Govinda*, *Ragamala*, *Bhagvata Purana*, etc., got renewed stimulus.

As elsewhere, many copies were also produced by means of tracing and pouncing. By the early nineteenth century, there was a lavish use of gold. Jaipur preferred large size formats and produced life-size portraits.

EXERCISE

1. In what ways do you think that the Western Indian manuscript painting tradition guided the developments of miniature painting traditions in Rajasthan?
2. Describe different schools of Rajasthani paintings and give examples to support their characteristics.
3. What is *Ragamala*? Give examples of *Ragamala* paintings from various schools of Rajasthan.
4. Draw a map and label all schools of Rajasthani miniature paintings.
5. Which texts provided the content or theme for miniature paintings? Describe them with examples.

© NCERT not to be republished

BHAGVATA PURANA

Illustrating scenes from the *Bhagvata Purana*, depicting different scenes from the life of Lord Krishna and his *leela*, have been a popular theme throughout the medieval period for artists. This painting from the collection of National Museum, New Delhi, shows the killing of demon Shaktasura by Krishna (1680–1690).

This folio from *Bhagvata Purana* is a typical example of Malwa style, where the space is carefully compartmentalised with each section narrating different scenes of an episode. One observes scenes of celebration and festivities in the house of Nanda and Yashoda after the birth of Krishna. Men and women are singing and dancing (lower left and upper middle section); overjoyed parents—Nanda and Yashoda—are involved in charitable activities and are seen donating cows and calves to Brahmins and well-wishers (middle left and extreme right); lot of delicious food is being prepared (central section); women are hovering over baby Krishna to safeguard him form the evil eye (upper left section) and the narrative concludes with Krishna toppling, and thus, liberating the cart demon, Shakatasura, with a gentle kick.

© NCERT not to be republished

MARU RAGINI

A particular set of *Ragamala* paintings from Mewar is, especially, important as one of its paintings bears crucial documentary evidence regarding its artist, patron, place and date of painting. *Maru Ragini* is from this set, which is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi. The initial part of the inscription found on the painting, representing Maru Ragini, classifies Maru as the *ragini* of Raga Shri and describes her physical beauty and its effect on her beloved. It is the latter half that is engrossing as it reads, "… samvat 1685 varshe aso vad 9 Rana Shri Jagat Singh Rajen Udaipur madhe likhitam chitara Sahivdin bachan hara ne ram ram."

Samvat 1685 is 1628 CE and Sahibdin is referred to as *chitara*, meaning 'someone who paints', and the act of painting is termed as *likhitam*, translated as 'written' since the goal of the artist was to produce a painterly equivalent to the written verse inscribed on the painting.

Maru is accommodated as the consort of Raga Shri because of the popular appeal of *Dhola-Maru* ballad that is deeply entrenched in the folklore and oral tradition of the region. It is the story of a prince named, Dhola, and princess Maru, who had to undergo numerous struggles to finally be together. The trials and tribulations, the evil relatives, battles, tragic accidents, etc., form the plot of the narrative. Here, they are depicted escaping together on a camel.

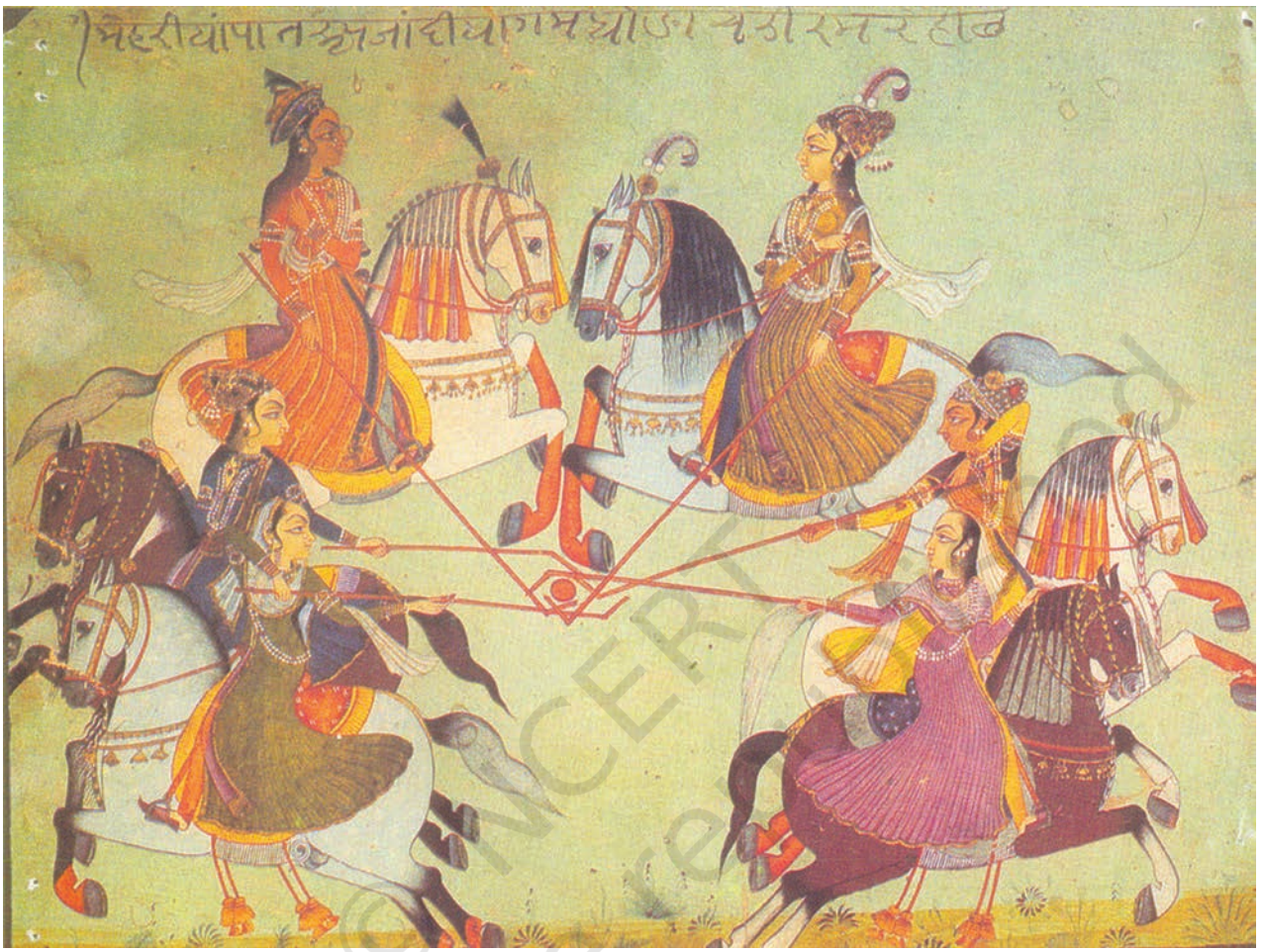
not to be republished © NCERT

RAJA ANIRUDDHA SINGH HARA

Aniruddha Singh (1682–1702) succeeded Bhao Singh. Few remarkable paintings with interesting documentary evidence have survived from his period. One of them being the much talked of equestrian portrait of Aniruddha Singh by artist Tulchi Ram painted in 1680. It epitomises an artist's perception of speed and a horse in motion that he accomplished by completely negating the rendering of the foreground. The horse is seen galloping so high in the air that the ground is not visible. The value of such paintings is that they turn still portraits into narratives. Names of Tulchi Ram and prince (Kanwar) Aniruddha Singh are inscribed behind the painting. But in the front, the name of Bharat Singh, the youngest son of Rao Chattarsal, is inscribed. Some scholars feel this painting represents Bharat Singh, while a majority are of the opinion that it represents young Anirrudha Singh before he ascended to the throne. This painting is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi.

© NCERT not to be republished

CHAUGAN PLAYERS

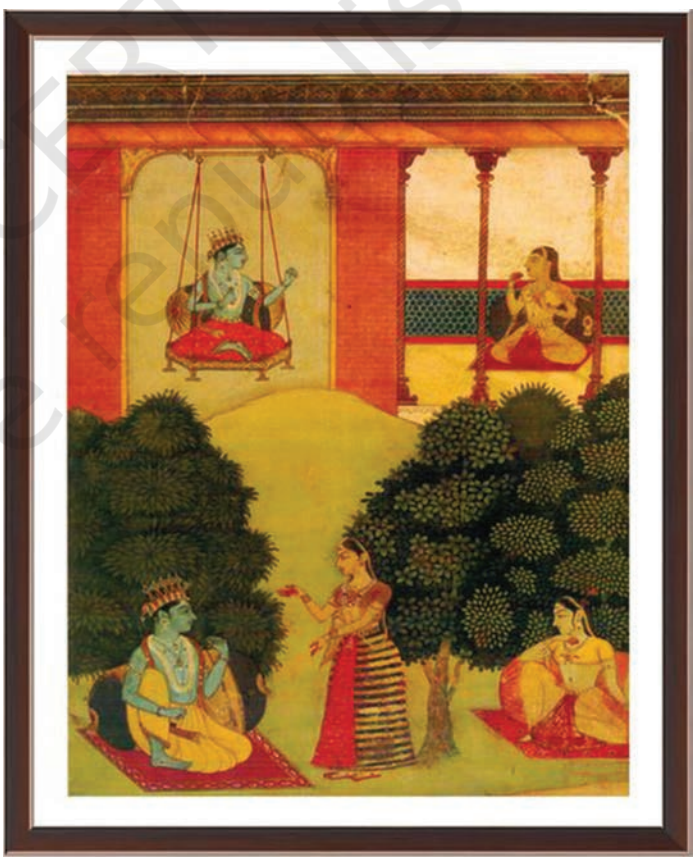


This painting, depicting a princess playing Polo (*Chaugan*) with companions, by artist Dana represents Jodhpur painting of Man Singh's reign. It may or may not be from the main court as it betrays stylistic influence of many schools, such as Mughal in the way women are depicted, Deccani in the way horses are depicted, Bundi and Kishangarh in the depiction of facial features, and the flat green background is suggestive of the indigenous preference for flat surfaces. The painting is inscribed with a line on the upper portion that is translated as, "beautiful maidens on horsebacks, playing". The painting was made in 1810 and is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi.

© NCERT not to be republished

KRISHNA SWINGING AND RADHA IN SAD MOOD

This painting, illustrating *Rasikapriya*, is notable as it is inscribed with a date and name of the artist. Painted in 1683 by artist Nuruddin, who worked in the court of Bikaner from 1674 to 1698, it presents a stark and simple composition with minimal and suggestive representation of architecture and elements of landscape. Nuruddin has ingeniously employed the device of soft undulating mound in the centre to divide the painting into two sections. It operates as a pictorial prop that transforms an urban setting into a tree-laden countryside and vice versa. An architectural pavilion in the upper part of the painting pictorially qualifies that space as the 'palatial interior', while few trees on the green grassland suggest 'outdoors and pastoral' landscape. Hence, one understands the movement of the narrative from top to bottom as a progression of activities from indoors to outdoors.



Appearing in the upper section of the painting, Krishna seated on a swing seems to be enjoying himself in the company of a Gopi at her dwelling. On learning about his rendezvous a jilted Radha, stricken with grief, disappears into the countryside and finds herself alone under a tree. Guilt-ridden Krishna, on learning of Radha's sorrow, follows her but there is no truce happening. Meanwhile, Radha's *sakhi* (friend) gets to know of the fall out and takes on the role of a messenger and pacifier. She comes to Krishna and tells him of the misery and plight of Radha, and implores him to appease her. This painting is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi.

© NCERT not to be republished

BANI THANI

Sawant Singh composed devotional poetry on Krishna and Radha in Brajbhasha under the pen name Nagari Das. He is said to have been passionately in love with a young singer, who was accorded the title 'Bani Thani', the bewitching lady of fashion, because of her unparalleled beauty and elegance. She was an attendant of Raj Singh's wife and a gifted poetess, singer and dancer. Bani Thani was Sawant Singh's muse for the poetry he wrote, celebrating the love of Radha and Krishna. He writes about her in a poem *Bihari Jas Chandrika*, which became the basis for Nihal chand's painting of Bani Thani, thus, representing a blending of poetry and painting. Troubled by fratricidal conflict, Sawant Singh, eventually, abdicated the throne in 1757 and retired to Vrindavan along with Bani Thani.

The exaggerated facial type of Kishangarh, which becomes the distinctive and salient stylistic feature of the Kishangarh School, is believed to have been derived from the attractively sharp facial features of Bani Thani.

Artist Nihal Chand is attributed with the credit of contriving this exquisite and characteristic Kishangarh physiognomy that is perceived in figures of Sawant Singh and Bani Thani is always represented as Krishna and Radha in brilliantly coloured, panoramic landscapes.

Radha's face in Bani Thani as Radha is unique in her deeply curved eyes, exaggerated arch of the eyebrows, pointed nose, serpentine curl of hair spiralling down the cheek, thin lips and pronounced chin. This particular painting is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi.

© NCERT not to be republished

RAMA MEETS MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY AT CHITRAKUT

This painting of *Ramayana* by Guman, made between 1740 and 1750, is a classic example of a continuous narrative. Plain looking huts (*parna kutir*) raised with basic material, such as mud, wood and green leaves set in the woods on the foothills and surrounded by groves establish a typical rural setting, where this episode of *Ramayana* unfolds. Artist Guman begins the narrative from the left and ends it on the right.

According to the *Ramayana*, Bharat was away when Rama was sent to exile. After the passing away of Dashratha, overcome with grief and filled with remorse, Bharat along with the three mothers, sage Vasishtha and courtiers visits Rama to persuade him to return to Ayodhya.

Set in Chitrakut, the story in the painting begins with the three mothers along with the wives of the princes proceeding towards the thatched dwellings. On seeing the mothers, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita bow down in reverence. Bereaved

© NCERT not to be republished

Kaushalya rushes to her son Rama and gathers him in her arms. Rama is, then, seen respectfully greeting the other two mothers—Sumitra and Kaikeyi. He, then, dutifully acknowledges the two sages and sits down talking to them. When the sage breaks the news of Dashratha's death, Rama is seen collapsing in anguish. Sumanta is seen devotedly standing behind the sages. The three mothers and the wives of Lakshmana, Bharat and Shatrughana are depicted talking to Sita. The narrative ends with the group exiting the picture frame on the right. Each character of the story in the painting is labeled. A verse, describing the same, is also inscribed on the upper portion of the painting. This painting is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi.

© NCERT not to be republished

The Mughal School of Miniature Painting 3

Mughal painting is the style of miniature painting that developed in the northern Indian subcontinent in the sixteenth century and continued till the mid–nineteenth century. It is known for its sophisticated techniques and diverse range of subjects and themes. The Mughal miniature painting inspired and resonated in subsequent schools and styles of Indian painting, thereby, confirming a definite position for the Mughal style within the Indian school of paintings.

The Mughals were patrons of various art forms. Every Mughal successor, based on his taste and preferences, contributed towards enhancing the status of art, viz., calligraphy, painting, architecture, bookmaking, book illustration projects, etc. They took keen interest in artists' ateliers and nurtured unprecedented new styles that heightened and accelerated the existing art scenario of India. Therefore, for understanding the Mughal Painting, the political history and genealogy of the Mughal dynasty is often taken into account.

Influences on Mughal Painting

The Mughal style of miniature painting was responsible for the amalgamation of indigenous themes and styles along with Persian and later European themes and styles. The arts of this period reflect a synthesis of foreign influences and indigenous flavour. The peak of Mughal painting presented a highly sophisticated blend of the Islamic, Hindu and European visual culture and aesthetics. Given this diverse yet inclusive nature, the affluence of the artworks produced in India during this period surpasses the conventional and indigenous Indian and Iranian painting of that time. The significance of this style lies in the purpose and efforts of its patrons and the unmatched skill of its artists. Together, they envisaged and expressed a congregation of tastes, philosophies and faiths by their extraordinary visual language.

© NCERT not to be republished

In the Mughal courts, arts became more formalised as there were workshops and many artists were brought from Iran, which resulted in a harmonious blend of Indo-Iranian styles, especially during its early years. This celebrated eminence in Mughal art was possible only due to its distinctive character of assimilating and engaging artists of both Indian and Iranian origins, who contributed towards making, and further elevating the artistic paradigm of the Mughal style.

The Mughal atelier consisted of calligraphers, painters, gilders and binders. Paintings recorded and documented significant events, personalities and interests of the emperors. These were meant to be seen by the royals only. The paintings were made to suit the sensitivity of the royals or often made as intellectual stimulation. The paintings were a part of manuscripts and albums.

The tradition of art and painting had rich historical roots in India about which we have already learned in the previous chapters. The celebrated Mughal idiom that developed on the Indian soil should be understood as a consequence of interaction of various schools, including the pre–Mughal and contemporaneous art schools of India and Persia. Thus, the Mughal style did not grow in vacuum. It was nurtured by direct interaction with other art forms and schools that already existed. The indigenous Indian and Mughal painting styles coexisted, assimilated the influences and various native talents in different ways.

The pre–Mughal and parallel indigenous schools of paintings in India had their strong distinct style, aesthetics and purpose. The indigenous Indian style emphasised on flat perspective, strong use of lines, vivid colour palette, and bold modelling of figures and architecture. The Mughal style offered subtlety and finesse, portrayed almost three-dimensional figures and created optical reality. The royal court scenes, portraits, depiction of accurate flora and fauna were some of the favourite themes of the Mughal artists. Thus, the Mughal painting ushered in a new style and sophistication to the Indian arts of that time.

The Mughal patrons contributed to the proliferation of the Mughal style of painting with their distinct artistic preferences, choice of subjects, philosophies and aesthetic sensibilities. In the following segment of this chapter, we shall learn about the development of Mughal miniature painting in chronological order.

© NCERT not to be republished

Early Mughal Painting

In 1526, Babur, the first Mughal emperor, came from present day Uzbekistan and was a descendent of Emperor Timur and Chatghtai Turk. With this, he blended the cultural background and aesthetic sensibilities of Persia and Central Asia. Babur had a dynamic taste for a variety of arts. He is reputed to be a man of letters and a keen patron of art, manuscripts, architecture, gardening, etc. Babur's detailed accounts in *Baburnama*, his autobiography, are narratives of the emperor's political carrier and artistic passion. *Baburnama* reflects the love and fondness that Babur had as an outsider for the Indian land and ecology. With his fervour for detailed writing, Babur established a tradition of keeping memoirs, a practice which was followed by his successors in India. The books and albums that were produced in the royal ateliers were not only calligraphed but also painted. These books of value were preserved and passed on to members of the royal family or gifted to those perceived as deserving. Babur had a keen eye for portraiture and this is also recorded in his memoirs. Among the artists, who find mention in Babur's memoirs is Bihzad. Bihzad's work was

Princes of the House of Timur, Abd us Samad, 1545–50, British Museum, London

© NCERT not to be republished

dainty but he did not draw the faces well; he used to greatly lengthen the double chin (*ghab-ghab*); and drew bearded faces admirably. Bihzad was a master artist from the Persian school of painting, Herat (now in present day Afghanistan), and was known for his sophisticated compositions and colour tints. Also, Shah Muzaffar finds a mention as a painter, who Babur thought excelled in the representation of hairstyle. Although Babur spent little time on the Indian soil and passed away soon after his arrival, his successors made the country their own and became a part of the Indian lineage.

Babur was succeeded by his son Humayun in 1530, who unfortunately fell prey to political unrest, and his life took many unexpected turns. Dethroned by an Afghan, Sher Khan (Sher Shah), Humayun took refuge in the court of the Safavid Persian ruler, Shah Tahmasp. Although inglorious for his political career, this was fortunate for the startling turn that the art of manuscript and painting under him took as a result of his stay in Safavid. It was during his exile in Shah Tahmasp's court that Humanyun witnessed the magnificent artistic tradition of miniature paintings and manuscripts. He was thrilled to see the skillful artists in practice, creating splendid works of art for Shah Tahmasp. With the assistance of Shah Tahmasp, Humayun established his court in Kabul in 1545. Humayun increasingly identified himself with a political and cultural agenda for his dynastic empire that was eclectic and assimilative. Impressed by the artists and with an ambition to recreate such art workshops in India, Humayun brought back with him the master artists when he regained power in India. He invited two Persian artists—Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd us Samad to establish a studio in his court and carry out royal paintings. It is important to note here that both the artists were famous and respected particularly for their skills in the art of portraiture.

Tutinama: The Girl and the Parrot, 1580–1585, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

A bibliophile of discerning sensitivity, Humayun's rule began a period of intense patronage for the art of painting and calligraphy. From his period, we get clear visual and textual documents that testify an active

© NCERT not to be republished

interest in building an artistic repertoire and an imperial atelier. This is an indication of Humayun's artistic taste and helps us form a picture of Humayun as a connoisseur and an aesthete. He founded the *Nigaar Khana* (painting workshop), which was also a part of his library. Not much is known about the size and composition of Humayun's workshop in India. However, it is known that he started the project of illustration of *Hamza Nama* that was continued by his son and successor Akbar.

When we look at an extraordinary Mughal painting from the early period, *Princes of the House of Timur* (1545–50), probably by Safavid artist, Abd us Samad, in opaque watercolour on cotton, we are surprised by its size and complex structure and display of historical portraits. A prized possession of the imperial family, it has portraits that were painted over the original to register the portraits of successive members of the Mughal dynasty. So, visible in their physical likeness are portraits of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan painted subsequently over those painted during the reign of Humayun.

Babur inspecting the fort of Gwalior, Bhure, Baburnama, 1598, National Museum, New Delhi

Open air painting with trees and blossoms, and royal merrymaking, which depicts the ancestral members of the Mughal dynasty were followed after Humayun, who was the patron of this kind of artwork. The format, theme, figures and colour palette are remarkably Persian. There is indeed at this point we may state that there is no particular dominant element having Indian inspiration. But soon, this vocabulary changes to accommodate the growing and peculiar Mughal sensibility and distinct imperial taste.

The tradition and fascination for painting started by Humayun was carried forward by his illustrious son Akbar (1556–1605). Abul Fazal, the court historian of Akbar, writes about Akbar's passion for arts. He records that more than a hundred artists were employed in the royal atelier. This included the most skilled Persian and indigenous Indian artists of that time. This integrated composition of Indo-Persian artists led to the development of a unique style in this period. These artists together undertook ambitious projects that established new artistic

© NCERT not to be republished

standards with regard to visual language, as well as, subject matter. Akbar, believed to be suffering from dyslexia (a condition where a person finds difficulty in reading), laid great emphasis on illustration of manuscripts. It was under his patronage that several seminal projects of translation and illustration of manuscripts were carried out.

The earliest of his projects is the continuation of his father's artistic legacy of *Hamza Nama*, an illustrated account of the heroic deeds of Hamza, the uncle of Prophet Muhammad. Akbar took delight in hearing the stories of Hamza, a character much loved in the Middle East popular and intellectual circles, which were read out aloud by a professional narrator. Simultaneously, the corresponding folios and painted *Hamza Nama* narrative was held for a clear view. The emperor took great interest in both pictorial narrative, as well as, recitation of *Hamza Nama*. Because of the peculiar function of these paintings, their format is large. The base surface is cloth with paper at the back, on which the narrative text is written to help the narrator and the technique applied is gouache, which is water-based and in opaque colours.

One realises that Mughal paintings were a teamwork by a group of artists, who could be inspired by a number of artistic traditions. The immediate natural surroundings became the resource from which the images of flora and fauna were derived and painted. The painted folios of *Hamza Nama* are scattered all over the world and housed in various collections. It is recorded to have consisted of 14 volumes with 1400 illustrations and took nearly 15 years to be completed. The suggested date of this magnificent project is 1567–1582 and was completed under the supervision of two Persian masters—Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd us Samad.

Spies of Hamza attack the City of Kaymar, 1567–1582, Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna

In *Hamza Nama* painting, *Spies Attack the City of Kaymar* (1567–82), the space is sharply cut and divided so as to facilitate visual reading of the narrative. Too much of action is happening and the vibrant colours are of great use here to energise the unfolding of this story, wherein, the spies of Hamza attack the city of Kaymar. A strong outer line defines the foliage and other forms. The faces are largely

© NCERT not to be republished

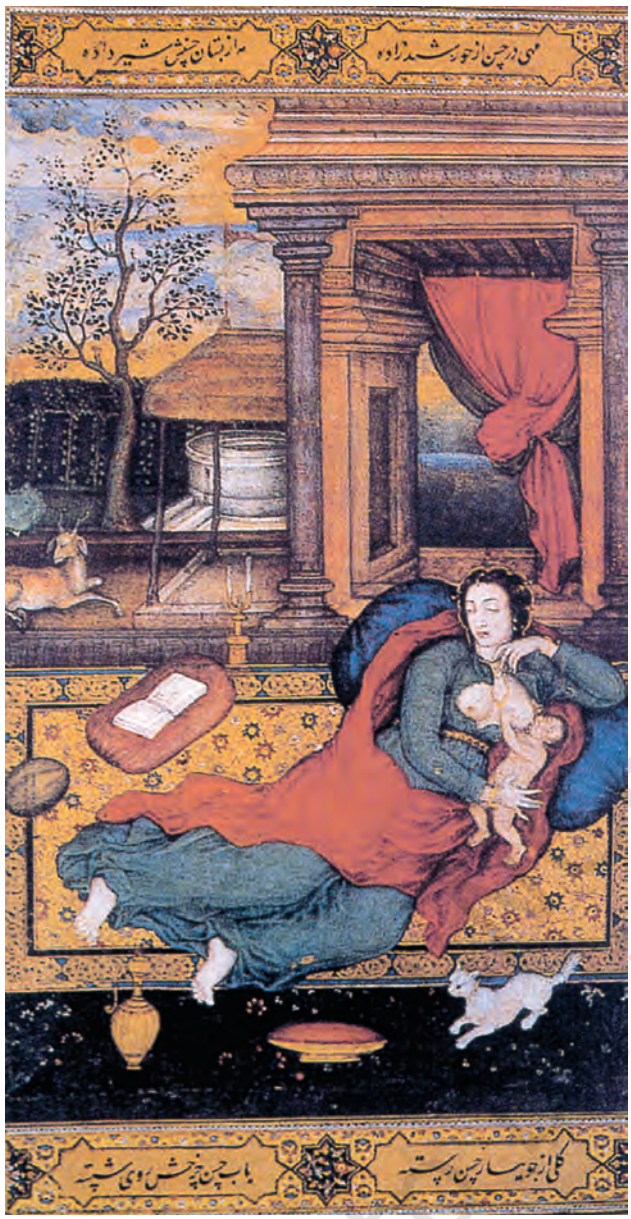
seen in profile. However, three–fourth faces are also shown. The rich intricate patterns on the floor, columns and canopy are from Persian sources as also the four-limbed animals and rocks. Trees and creepers indicate Indian source as also the rich palette of pure yellows, reds and browns.

Akbar envisioned cultural integration and commissioned translation of several revered Hindu texts. He commissioned translation and illustration of revered Sanskrit texts into Persian. The Persian translation and illustrated version of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata* done this period came to be known as *Razm Nama*. This was completed in 1589 under the supervision of master artist Daswant. This manuscript was scribed in ornate calligraphy and contained 169 paintings. The translation and illustration of the *Ramayana* were also carried out around this time. Artists like Govardhan and Miskin were celebrated for their visuals of court scenes. *Akbar Nama*, an extraordinary manuscript, containing a detailed account of Akbar's political and personal life, was one of the most expensive projects undertaken by Akbar.

Akbar personally engaged with the artists, and supervised and evaluated the artworks. The Mughal painting under Akbar's patronage depicted a variety of subjects, including, detailed political conquests, seminal court scenes, secular texts, portraits of important men along with Hindu mythologies, and Persian and Islamic themes. Akbar's fascination for Indian scriptures and regard for India made him one of the most popular emperors of the country.

In most of the paintings, produced from the time that the Europeans were in contact with the court of Akbar, we can see an increasing preference for a category of naturalism adapted to compliment the growing diversity in medieval India. *Madonna and Child* (1580) done in opaque watercolour on paper is an important early work of the Mughal School of Painting in this context. Madonna, here, is an extraordinary theme, which brings the Byzantine art, the European classical and its Renaissance to the Mughal atelier, where it is translated and transformed into an entirely different visual experience. Virgin Mary is draped in a classical manner. The attachment displayed between the mother and the child was inspired by the humanist interpretation in the European Renaissance art. The physiology of the child, certain details like the fan and jewellery completely integrated the work to an Indian milieu.

© NCERT not to be republished



Madonna and Child, Basawan,1590, San Diego Museum of Art, California

Inspired by Akbar's interest in arts, many sub-imperial courts absorbed this passion and several great works of art were produced for aristocratic families, who tried to copy the Mughal court atelier taste and produced works that present distinctive subjects and visual preferences in regional flavour.

Akbar had formalised the Mughal miniature style and set standards, which were further taken to new heights by his son Jahangir (1605–1627). Prince Salim, (Jahangir) showed interest in art from an early age. Unlike his father Akbar, who commissioned paintings and manuscripts of politically and religiously significant aspects, Prince Salim had a curious taste and encouraged delicate observations and fine details.

Jahangir employed Aqa Riza, a well-known Iranian painter and his son Abul Hasan to achieve unparalleled sophistication in painting. Despite the formalised and established imperial atelier of Akbar, the keen patron in Jahangir rebelled to set his own atelier alongside his father's. Prince Salim came to be known as Jahangir—the World Seizer once he acquired the Mughal throne after his return from Allahabad. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the memoirs of Jahangir, tells about his great interest in arts and his efforts of achieving scientific correctness in the rendering flora and fauna that interested the Emperor the most. Under his patronage, the Mughal painting achieved naturalism and scientific accuracy of the highest degree. The curiosity and wonderment that the Emperor had for nature and people around him is reflected in the works that he commissioned.

In contrast to the Akbar's atelier, where the works were mass produced, Jahangir's atelier gave preference to a lesser number and better quality of artworks produced by a single master artist. The *Muraqqas* individual paintings to be mounted

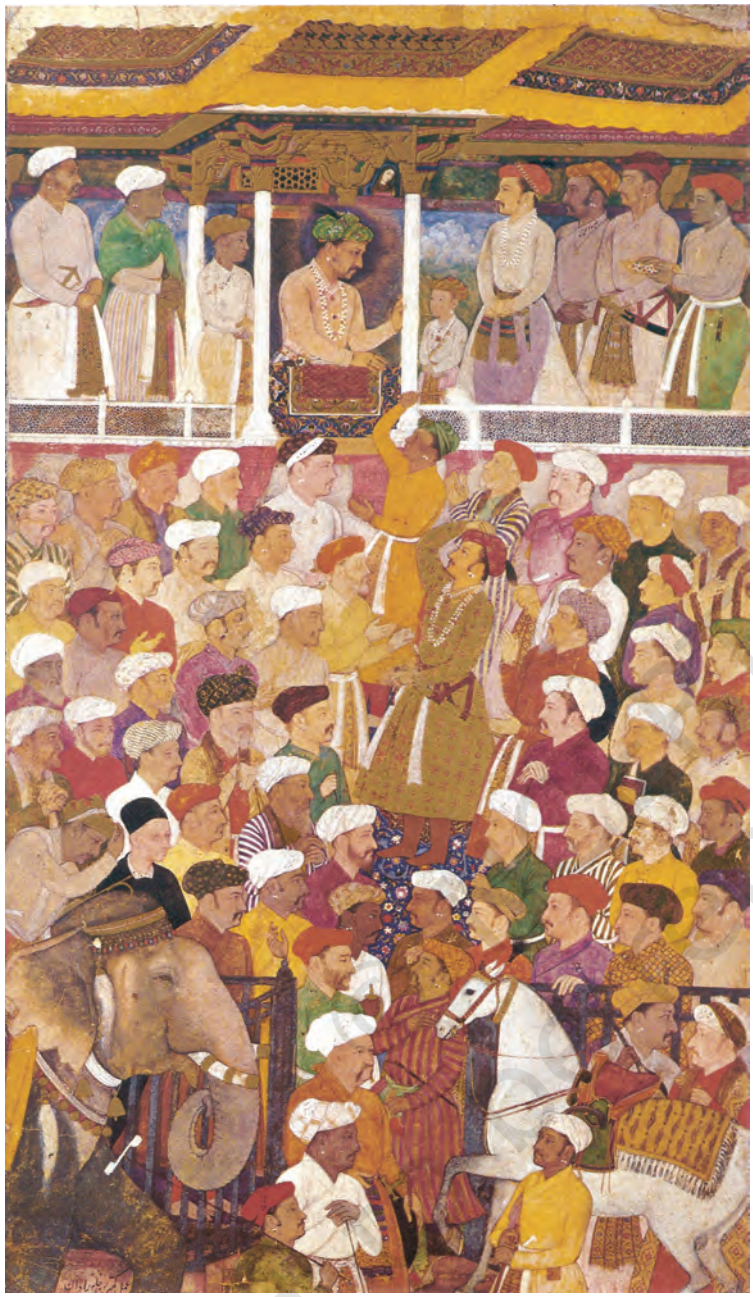
not to be republished © NCERT

in albums became popular under Jahangir's patronage. The margins of the paintings were highly illuminated in gold and embellished with flora, fauna, and often poised human figures. The war scenes, portraits, narrative and storytelling prevalent in Akbar's style were overtaken by minute details and refined rendering of lavish court scenes, aristocracy, royal personalities, as well as, character traits, and distinctiveness of flora and fauna.

Jahangir was presented with paintings and decorative objects, depicting high arts from Europe, as gifts from the Europeans, who visited his court. With such a contact with the English Crown, Jahangir's fascination for European art and theme prompted him to have more such works in his collection. Many celebrated religious Christian themes were also produced in the royal atelier of Jahangir. Given this cultural and artistic exposure, European art sensibilities started making their way into the prevalent Indo-Iranian style, thereby, making the Jahangir school of art more impressive and vibrant. The spatial depth of the composition and naturalistic representation of life reflect the high benchmarks that the sensitive patron created for art during his lifetime. The artists of the Mughal atelier creatively assimilated the three styles—indigenous, Persian and European, making the Mughal Art School a melting pot of vibrant styles of its time yet very distinct in its own way.

A Prince and a Hermit, folio from Diwan of Amir Shahi, 1595, Aga Khan Museum, Canada

Jahangir in Darbar from *Jahangirnama* (now, dispersed), attributed to Abul Hasan and Manohar (1620) is an excellent painting. Jahangir is at the highest level in the centre, where the eyes move immediately from his figured frame to stunning white pillars surrounded by sparkling clear colours and brilliantly framed overhead canopy. On the right side,



Jahangir in Darbar, Jahangirnama, Abul Hasan and Manohar, 1620, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Khurram stands in attendance with his hands folded, flanked by his son Shuja, son of Mumtaz Mahal, who was raised in the court by Nur Jahan. The courtiers, who are placed according to their ranks, are easily identifiable as their portraiture is perfect and realistic. Father Corsi, a Jesuit priest, has his name inscribed to aid easy identification as he stands with other known nobles in the audience. Elephant and horse add to the ceremonious importance to this event as hands are raised and heads bow to salute Jahangir.

Jahangir's Dream (1618–22) by Abul Hasan, given the title *Nadir al Zaman*, meaning the 'Wonder of the Age', refers to the Emperor's dream, in which he was visited by Persian Safavid emperor Shah Abbas, his rival, who possessed the much desired province of Qandahar. Interpreting it as good omen, he had the court artist Abul Hasan paint the dream. In this painting, political fantasy takes over and the presence of Jahangir dominates the composition. The Persian Shah appears frail and vulnerable as he is embraced by Jahangir. The kings stand on a globe, and between them, they hover over much of India and Middle East. Two animals sleep quietly. However, the symbolism of their depiction does not escape the viewer. The powerful lion, on which Jahangir towers, and the docile sheep, on which the Persian Shah stands, sharing a magnificent resplendent golden halo of the Sun and Moon held by two winged angels indicate of being inspired by the incoming European art motifs and imageries in the Mughal court.

not to be republished

In the painting, *Jahangir enthroned on an Hourglass* (1625), symbolism is creatively applied by the court painter, Bichitra, who can be seen on the emperor's right hand corner holding a painting in his hand, which would be his offering to the mighty emperor.

Persian calligraphy adorns the top and bottom, which in verse says that the Shahs of this world may stand before him as Jahangir prefers to have the dervishes. Portrait that resemble the Ottoman Sultan, King James I of England also stands on the right hand with gifts for the mighty emperor. Jahangir offers a book to Shaikh Husain of the Chisti Shrine, descendent of Shaikh Salim, in whose honour Akbar had named his son Salim.

The son of Jahangir, Prince Khurram, succeeded the throne of Delhi by the name Shah Jahan (1628–1658). With this, he not only acquired a politically stable empire but also the finest of artist and atelier. Shah Jahan encouraged the artists in the atelier to create magnificent works that were a blend of imagination and documentation. Idealisation and great stylisation were preferred over naturalistic rendering and accurate depiction. The artworks produced under his supervision concentrated on subliminal qualities and exalted beautification, which was created by the use of jewel-like colours, perfect rendering and intricate fine lines. The higher concepts in the painting were given much prominence and the visuals were created meticulously to cull out multitude of interpretations that a single painting could offer. His love for sparkling jewels and gems, passion for monumental architecture and subject choice of paintings inform us of the majestic image that he wanted to leave behind. Imperial portraits with glorious titles were painted to present the personality of the emperor himself.

Padshahnama (The Chronicles of the King) is one of the most exuberant painting projects undertaken by his court atelier and reflects the extraordinary manuscript that presents the height that Indian miniature painting achieved. The Mughal painting during this time depicted the impressive play of multiple perspectives, enchanting palate of colours

Jahangir's Dream, Abul Hasan, 1618–1622, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D. C.

Jahangir enthroned on an Hourglass, Bichitra, 1625, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D. C.

© NCERT not to be republished

and sophisticated compositions to portray royal, historical and mystic subjects.

The Mughal School of Painting, which had embraced and presented the exuberating blend of the leading art traditions of its contemporary world, began to inspire the European artists of that time. Rembrandt, a celebrated European painter, was deeply inspired by the Mughal court painting and made studies of several Indian drawings to master the delicate lines. His studies show the celebrated position that the Mughal miniature painting occupied in the world art scene.

The legitimate successor of Shah Jahan, his son Dara Shikoh, was denied his empire and life. As a liberal unorthodox Mughal, Dara's commitment to Sufi mysticism and deep interest in Vedantic school of thought was outstanding. His persona has been immortalised in this exceptional painting, *Dara Shikoh with Sages in a Garden* (1635). Loved by his people, Dara, the scholar, who knew many languages, including Sanskrit, is the central theme here. A poet and connoisseur, he commissioned a special album of painting to gift his wife. Unfortunately, Dara, due to his passion for literature and philosophy, was misinterpreted as submissive and that his personality lacked dexterity for political administration. Dara, in apparent contrast to his brother Aurangzeb, was eclectic, philosophical and inclusive in his approach to ideological issues and conflicts.

Dara Shikoh with Sages in a Garden, Bichitra, early seventeenth century. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

In the war of succession that occurred in the lifetime of Shah Jahan, Dara Shikoh was defeated by his brother Aurangzeb. Alamgir Aurangzeb came to power to stimulate the political scenario and give it the verve of Akbar's period. This succession and series of battles and conquest in Deccan India got the Mughal empire back

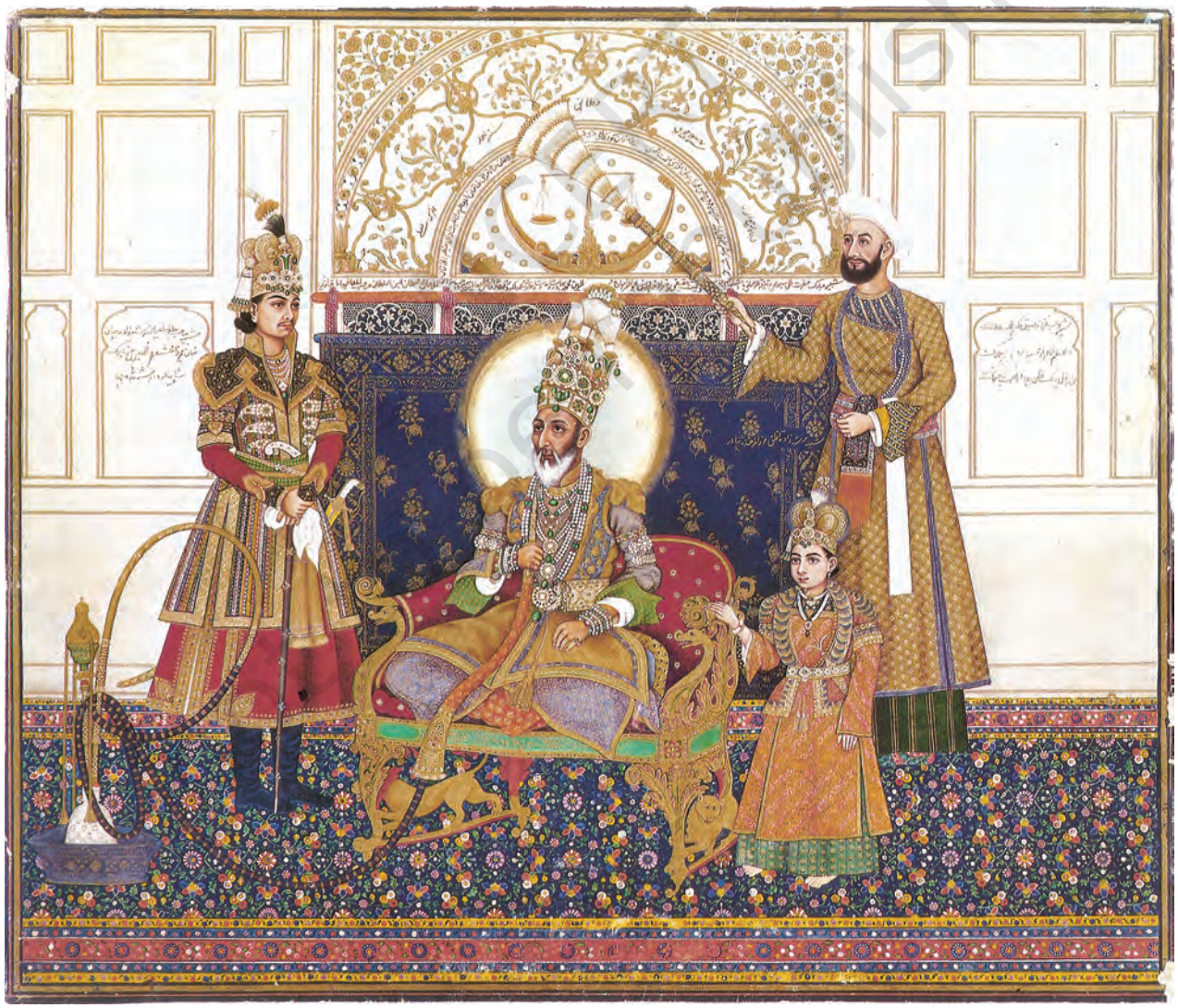
© NCERT not to be republished

on track. His focus was on the expansion of the Mughal empire and its unification under his leadership. Aurangzeb did not put as much effort to elevate the production of the Mughal atelier. However, unlike the popular belief the royal atelier was not shut down immediately and continued producing beautiful pointings.

Later Mughal Painting

Due to gradual decline of ardent patronage, highly skilled artists left the Mughal atelier and were welcomed by provincial Mughal rulers. These rulers imitated the Mughal royalties and wanted to recreate in paintings the glory of their dynasty and events of their court.

Bahadur Shah Zafar, 1838, Fogg Museum of Art, Cambridge, UK



Although some masterworks were produced during the periods of Muhammad Shah Rangila, Shah Alam II and Bhadur Shah Zafar, these were mere last flickers in the candle that was the Mughal miniature style. Bahadur Shah Zafar, painting, dated 1838, was made about two decades before he was exiled to Burma by the British, who were quick to see that no claimant to Mughal authority remains anywhere near Delhi to claim their imperial authority, after the failure of the Indian Revolt of 1857. He was the last Mughal ruler, who was also a poet, scholar and connoisseur.

The new political environment, unsettled regional kingdoms and threat of English ascendancy changed the art scenario of India yet again. The painters thrived to suit the changing patrons, their aesthetic concerns, choice of subject matters and visual language. Eventually, the Mughal miniature style converged into other styles of the Provincial and Company School.

Process of Mughal Painting

Most of the paintings that we see as Mughal miniatures were parts of manuscripts and royal albums, i.e., the visual and text shared space in a given format. For making book painting, the following process was adopted. Sheets of handmade paper were prepared and cut to suit the size of the manuscript. Designated space was left for the artist to fill it with a suitable visual composition. Then, the pages were ruled and filled with text. Once the text was written, it was given to the artist, who would compose a synoptic visual representation of the text. The artist would begin from the stage of making the composition, i.e., *tarh*, to portraits, i.e., *chiharanama* to the final stage of colouring, i.e., *rangamizi*.

Colours and Technique of Mughal Painting

The painters in the atelier were also masters of art making colours. Mughal paintings were made on handmade paper, which was prepared especially for this purpose. The colours were opaque and were obtained from natural sources by grinding and mixing pigments to obtain perfect shades of colours. The paint was applied using a variety of brushes made with the hair of squirrels or kittens. In workshops, painting was a combined effort of a group of artists, among whom basic draft drawing, grinding and filling in of colours,

© NCERT not to be republished

and adding details were, usually, distributed. However, they may also have been produced single handedly.

Thus, the artworks produced during the early Mughal phase were collaborative efforts of the team of artists. And based on one's specialisation, each artist would undertake an aspect of the painting that he was comfortable with or delegated. Records tell us that the artists were given incentives and increments in their salary according to the work done. The recorded names of the master artists also informs of the position that they enjoyed in the royal atelier.

Once the painting was complete, agate, a gemstone, was used to burnish the work to set the colours and give desired radiance to the painting.

Some of the pigments and colours achieved from those were—vermilion from cinnabar, ultramarine from Lapiz Lazuli, bright yellow from orpiment, shells grounded for making white and lampblack from charcoal. Gold and silver powders were mixed with colours or sprinkled to add extravagance to a painting.

PROJECT FOR STUDENTS

Select around five quotations from a writer, poet or philosopher. Translate them into the language of your choice. Create a manuscript with your translation in a calligraphic style and ornate borders, drawing inspiration from the Mughal manuscripts.

EXERCISE

1. Name two master artists, who were invited to India by Humayun, and discuss their masterpieces in detail.
2. Out of the several art projects that Akbar undertook, discuss your favourite work, explaining what you like about it.
3. Make a comprehensive list of artists in the Mughal court, briefly explaining one painting of each in 100 words.
4. With examples of three paintings of your choice, discuss the indigenous Indian, Persian and European visual elements prevalent during the medieval period.

© NCERT not to be republished

NOAH'S ARK

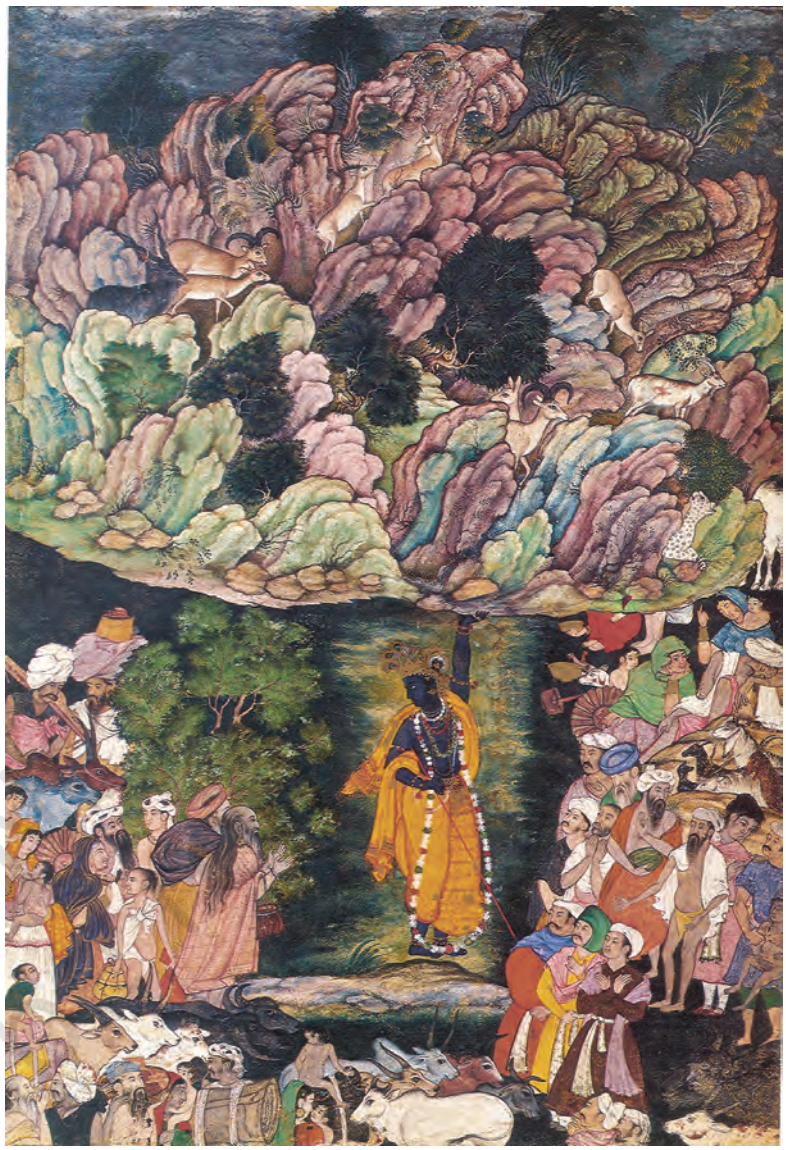
Noah's Ark, from a dispersed *Divan-i Hafiz* painted manuscript of 1590, is an excellent painting in subdued colour palette and has been ascribed to Miskin, one of the masters at Akbar's imperial atelier. Prophet Noah is in the ark, which is carrying animals in pairs so that they may continue to flourish after the threatening flood sent by God to punish human beings for their sins.

In the painting, the sons of Noah are in the act of throwing Iblis, the devil, who had come to destroy the ark. The use of pure white and subtle shades of red, blue and yellow is charming. The rendering of water is convincing and the vertical perspective infuses the painting with an element of heightened dramatic energy. This painting lies in the collection of Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D. C., USA

Reprint 2026-27

KRISHNA LIFTS MOUNT GOVARDHAN

Krishna Lifts Mount Govardhan from a dispersed *Harivamsa Purana* is attributed to Miskin (1585–90). It is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA. *Harivamsa Purana* is one of the many Sanskrit manuscripts, which were translated into Persian by the Mughals. This painting is on a theme from *Harivamsa*. Badauni, a scholar noble in the court of Akbar, was assigned the job of translating this volume on Lord Krishna into Persian. It is interesting to note that Badauni was famous for his orthodox religious views, much unlike Abul Fazl, another famous scholar chronicler in Akbar's court.



Hari or Lord Krishna lifted the mountain, Govardhan, with all creatures dwelling therein with the intention to protect them—the villagers and their livestock, who were his followers, from torrential rain sent by another powerful God Indra. Hari uses the mountain like a huge umbrella, under which the entire village takes refuge.

not to be republished © NCERT

FALCON ON A BIRD REST

This painting by Ustad Mansur, *Nadir ul Asr*, a title received from Jahangir, is in the collection of Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, USA. Jahangir had fine falcons brought to his collection, and as a keen connoisseur, he had them painted. These images were included in his official biography *Jahangirnama*. There is an interesting episode described by him of a falcon brought as a present from Persian emperor Shah Abbas. This is to do with the falcon, which was mauled by a cat, resulting in its death, and the Emperor desired his painters to paint the dead falcon, preserving its memory for posterity.

The painting shown here, *Falcon Perched on a Bird Rest* (1615), is one of the many paintings that were painted by the Mughal artist, Ustad Mansur.

© NCERT not to be republished

ZEBRA

The zebra in this painting was from Ethiopia, brought by Turks, and presented to Mughal emperor Jahangir by his nobleman Mir Ja'far, who had acquired it. Jahangir wrote on the painting in Persian, the court language, that it was: "A mule which the Turks (*rumiyan*) in the company of Mir Ja'far had brought from Ethiopia [Habesha]". Its likeness was drawn by Nadir ul asr (Wonder of the Age) Ustad Mansur. In *Jahangirnama*, it is clearly stated that the animal was presented to him during Nowruz or New Year festivities in March 1621. It is also mentioned that Jahangir had carefully examined it as some thought that it was a horse on which someone had painted stripes. Jahangir decided to send it to Shah Abbas of Iran, with whom he often exchanged rare and unique gifts, including animals and birds. And the Shah would also send him rare gifts like the Falcon discussed earlier.

The painting later came in Emperor Shah Jahan's possession. It was added to the royal album of paintings and calligraphies. The ornate borders of the painting are additions made in Shah Jahan's reign.

© NCERT not to be republished

THE MARRIAGE PROCESSION OF DARA SHIKOH

This painting, a work by artist Haji Madni, belongs to the period of Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal in Agra. It is a portrayal of the marriage procession of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. The Mughal prince is shown mounted on a brown stallion with the traditional *sehra* and is accompanied by his father, Shah Jahan, who has a resplendent nimbus around hid head, riding a white horse. The marriage procession is accompanied and received by music, dance, gifts and fireworks. The artist has created the glamour of the marriage procession with all its pomp and show. This painting is in the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi, India.

© not to be republished

The Deccani Schools of Painting 4

12144CH04

The history of Deccani Painting can largely be constructed from the late sixteenth century until the 1680s — the time when the Mughals conquered the Deccan. It is continued to be seen in the art of the nineteenth century, as well as, under the Asafiya dynasty, and finally, in paintings in the provincial courts of Rajas and Nawabs, ruling various lands in the State of Hyderabad under the Nizam.

The Deccani style of Painting was placed under the Indo-Persian art for long. It was considered to be Middle Eastern, Safavid, Persian, Turkish and even Mughal in origin. Art historians acknowledged its uniqueness but failed to recognise it as a full-fledged school, which was sustained by a class of rulers, who had their peculiar political and cultural vision. They hired and nurtured artists and commissioned works that enhanced their artistic sensibilities and specific requirements of governance in their kingdoms.

The art of portraiture and representation of historical and religious figures are seen elsewhere in other contemporary schools of painting. Mughal portraiture, in this sense, was not wholly unique. We see such artistic inclinations in the Safavid and Ottoman Schools of Painting. The highly documentary nature of portraits is a singularly unique development seen extensively in the Asian Islamic art as also in the Mughal art in India.

In the plateau region of southern India, beyond the Vindhya mountain range, an endearing school of painting, which was distinct and strong, was nurtured and expanded under various Sultans of the Deccan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Sultan Adil Shah II playing Tambura, Farrukh Beg, Bijapur, 1595–1600, National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic

© NCERT not to be republished

The kingdoms of Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar developed highly sophisticated and distinct school of court painting. Its unique sensuality and intense colours have strong affinity to regional aesthetics. The school preferred dense composition and attempted to create an aura of romance, which invariably expressed itself in an idiom that was eloquently natural and vivid.

Ahmadnagar School of Painting

The earliest examples of Deccani painting are in a volume of poems, celebrating the reign of Hussain Nizam Shah I of Ahmadnagar (1553–1565). Most of the 12 miniatures that illustrate battle scenes are of no artistic interest, but interestingly, those depicting the queen and her marriage delight us with gorgeous colours and sensuous lines. The woman represented in it belongs to the northern tradition of pre-Mughal painting, which was flourishing especially in Malwa and Ahmedabad during this period. The women in the paintings of Ahmadnagar wear a modified northern costume with *choli* (bodice) and long braided pigtails, ending in a tassel. Only a long scarf, passing round the body below the hips, is a southern fashion, which is seen in the Lepakshi frescoes. The palette is different from paintings of northern manuscripts, coming largely from the Mughal atelier, as they are more rich and brilliant. Paintings of the Deccan have similar characteristics. The high circular horizon and gold sky have Persian influence. We may see the debt of all Deccani kingdoms, which they owe to Persia for their landscape idiom.

Tarif–i–Hussain Shahi: King sitting on the Throne, Ahmadnagar, 1565–1569, Bharata Itihasa Samshodaka Mandala, Poona

These feminine dress, present in a series of *Ragamala* paintings, are the most striking and moving examples of the sixteenth century Deccan Schools of Painting. The women's hair is rolled up in a bun on the nape of the neck, similar to the Lepakshi murals. The horizon, in the painting, disappears and is replaced by a neutral coloured ground patterned all over with small stylised plants, or occupied by symmetrical architectural domes over the archades. All these features, except the hairstyle, have traces of north India or Persia.

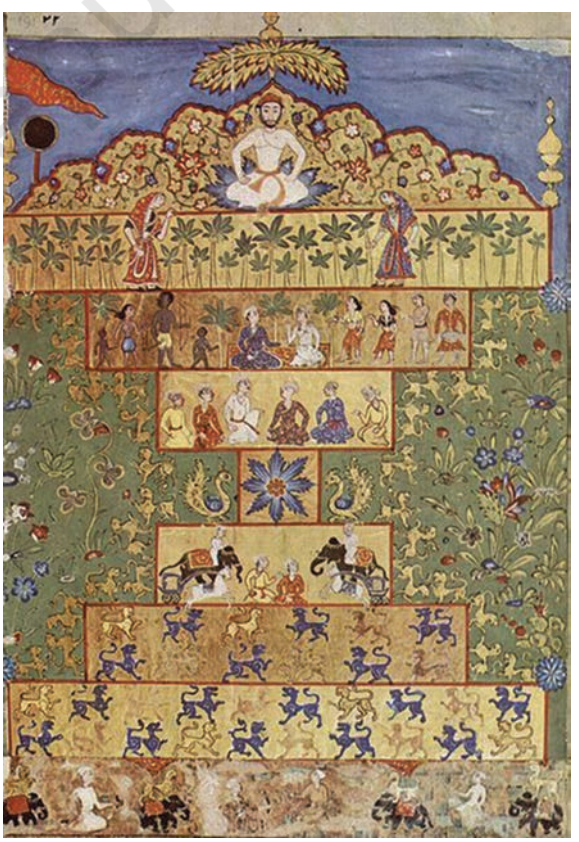
© NCERT not to be republished

Male costume is also decisively northern. The *jama* with pointed tails is frequently seen in early Akbari miniatures and probably originated in the area somewhere between Delhi and Ahmedabad. The small *pagri* is close to the form found in the earliest Akbari miniatures. The original paintings in the *Gulistan* of 1567 have been attributed by art historians to the Bukhara artists. Another interesting fact is that such painters may also have worked in the Deccan. This supported by a manuscript is now in the collection of Bankipore Library, Patna. It is signed by a scribe, Yusuf, and is dedicated to Ibrahim Adil (1569), presumably Ibrahim Qutb Shah of Golconda, who ruled from 1550–1580. This manuscript contains seven miniatures that are completely in the Bukhara idiom of that date.

Bijapur School of Painting

Paintings from Bijapur in the sixteenth century have a richly illustrated encyclopaedia known as the *Nujum al-Ulum* dated 1570. Among the 876 miniatures, which adorn this remarkable little volume, many illustrate weapons and utensils, while others the constellations. The women are shown in south Indian dress, tall and slender as those in the *Ragamala* paintings. The school of Bijapur was patronised by Ali Adil Shah I (1558–1580) and his successor Ibrahim II (1580–1627), both patrons of art and literature. The latter was also an expert in Indian music and author of a book on this subject, *Nauras-nama.* He was the owner of *Nujum al-Ulum* manuscript and might have commissioned the *Ragamala* series in the 1590s. Bijapur had a close connection with Turkey and astronomical illustrations in *Nujum al-Ulum* may have been derived from Ottoman Turkish manuscripts. The *Ragamala* are, as we have seen, Indian in their connections, with definite echoes of the Lepakshi style. They exemplify the luxuriant aestheticism of the Adil Shah court in their daring and brilliantly successful colouring and vigour of simplified compositions. *The Throne of Prosperity* is a symbolic diagram of an auspicious throne of

Nujum al-Ulum: The Throne of Prosperity, Bijapur, 1570, The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland



© NCERT not to be republished

seven stages, each supported by different inhabitants—from elephants and tigers to palm trees, through storeys of peacocks and primitive tribes. The basic structures recall the wood carved doorways and facades of Gujarati homes or perhaps remind us of the temples of the Deccan. The colouring of this page is in Islamic Persian tradition, especially, the arabesques on the top of the throne. We see it is surmounted by a Deccani foliage against amazingly deep blue sky. The stylised plants on either side of the throne have visual reference to margin decoration in Gujarati manuscript of say early sixteenth century. There is, thus, a strong Indian visual tradition that structure this miniature.

The theme of another Deccani painting is *Yogini*—one who believes in *yoga*, leads a disciplined life of physical and emotional training, pursues spiritual and intellectual explorations, and is famous for renunciation of worldly attachments. But such an attitude was not usual, and therefore, extraordinary in practice.

Yogini, Bijapur, seventeenth century, The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland

This work is attributed to an artist, about whom we do not have any record. It is to be noted that the artist prefers a vertical composition, where the long standing figure of the *Yogini* is complimented by a group of white structures right at the top, as a tapering, visual note. The *Yogini* is preoccupied with a *myna* bird as if in conversation. The *Yogini* is adorned with jewellery and her hair bun elongates her visual presence. The long scarves swirl in rhythmic circle around her body, which has exquisite flora surrounding it in exquisite landscape.

Golconda School of Painting

Golconda became an independent state in 1512. By the end of the sixteenth century, it was the wealthiest of the Deccan kingdoms. This was largely due to brisk trade from the ports along the east coast, from where iron and cotton goods were shipped to South East Asia. Meanwhile expansive trade continued with Persia, which became a rage in Europe

© NCERT not to be republished

and was greatly valued among painted cottons. Early in the seventeenth century, diamonds were discovered, expanding the source of revenue. The visuals from Golconda draw one's attention to the gold jewellery worn by both women and men. Besides, the themes of Golconda paintings gained exceptional fame.

Golconda's art became popular as Dutch merchants carried the portraits of sultans in the late seventeenth century to Europe. These were probably done for the bazaar and had references to royal paintings. The earlier Golconda paintings, dated 1635–1650, at times as large as eight feet high, were made to be used as wall hangings. These paintings are covered with pictorial designs, generally, figures in architectural settings of varied origin.

Dancing before Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, Golconda, 1590. British Museum, London, UK

The earliest five miniatures, identified as Golconda work, were bound up in *Diwan of Hafiz*, dated 1463. These paintings represent court scenes of a young ruler, who is depicted seated enthroned, holding a typically long and straight Deccani sword, in the centre of one of the painting folios. The Prince is seen wearing a white coat with embroidered vertical bands. All five painted pages are lavishly enriched with gold, touching deep azure sky. Dancing girls are seen entertaining the royal gathering. The symmetrical and apparently unfunctional architecture has several registers of flat screens one above the other. The ground appears covered with elaborately patterned carpets. It is important to note here that the painting suggests no Mughal influence. Purple hue is amply applied, and at times, animals become blue, so you see blue foxes.

There is a portrait of Muhammad Qutb Shah (1611–1626) as he sits on a *diwan* early in his reign. He wears this typical Golconda dress and an elegant tight-fitting cap. The composition has gained increased sophistication and skill, while the strict symmetry of the 1590 pages is retained. One may say there is adequate reference to

© NCERT not to be republished

Poet in a Garden, Muhammad Ali, Golconda, 1605–1615, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA

Mughal painting. We see a marked plastic rendering, especially, in the drape of the courteseans' and the groom's attire.

A manuscript of a Sufi poem with paraphrased prose is richly illustrated with more than 20 miniatures. Gold is again freely used. A peculiar feature seen is the colouring of the skies in gold and blue in separate bands. The men's and women's costumes indicate the fashion trend under Ibrahim II of Bijapur. The trees in the landscapes are of Deccani type, which are richly coloured and have a tinted edge. Moreover, plants are silhouetted against a mass of dark foliage, which is another prominent Deccani feature. This is seen in the painting of a tall woman speaking to a bird.

EXERCISE

1. What are the unique features of Deccani painting of *Yogini*? Find out about artists doing similar works nowadays.
2. What were the popular themes painted in the Deccani School? Describe some of them.
3. Write a note in 100 words on two paintings you like from the Deccani School.
4. How is the Deccani style of painting different from the Mughal style of painting?
5. What are the imperial symbols in a Deccani royal painting?
6. Which were the centres of painting in Deccan? Show them on a map.

© NCERT not to be republished

COMPOSITE HORSE

The painting is a curious mix of many artistic devices, which culminate as *Composite Horse*. The painting includes human figures intertwined in a manner that emerges as an extraordinary form of a galloping horse superimposed on a decorated background. Flying cranes and lions, Chinese clouds and plants with large leaves enhance the surreal element of this painting from Golconda, which is of early seventeenth century. When everything appears to be airy and flying, the eyes unexpectedly encounter two corners in the bottom of the painting, which have rocky formulations that anchor the painting on a solid ground. A certain dislocation of sense of space happens, making this painting a memorable visual experience. All actions happen within limited colour schema, which remains largely in the shades of brown and some blue.

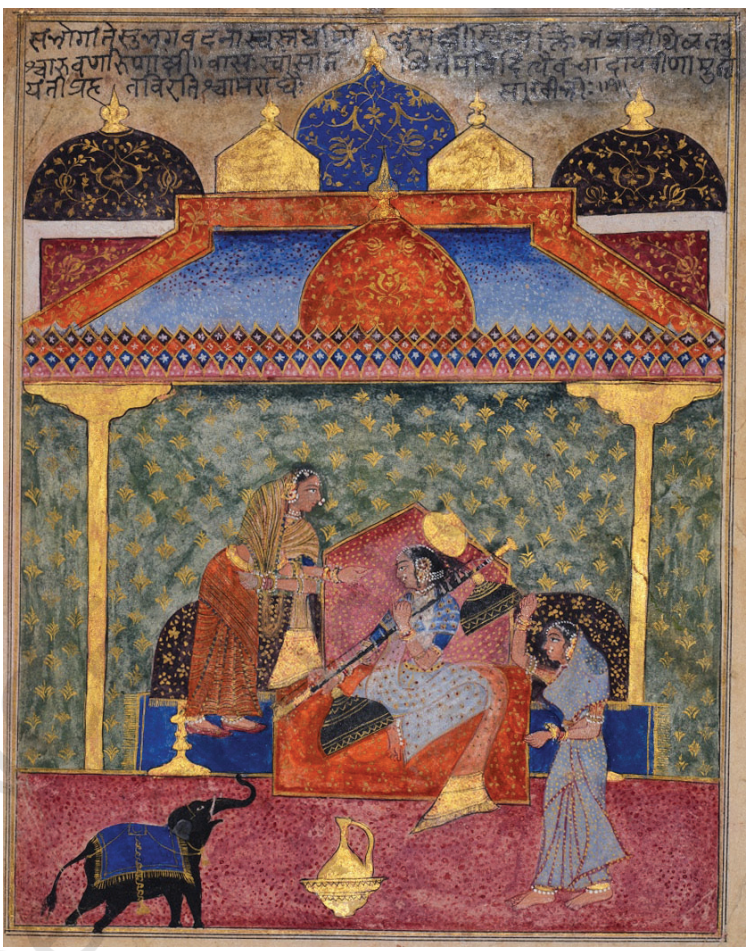
© NCERT not to be republished

SULTAN IBRAHIM ADIL SHAH II HAWKING

This is a painting of extraordinary energy and sensibility. The brilliant red on the limbs and tail of the horse, and the flowing garment of Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II render a visual experience, which remains with one. Besides, the dark dense forest foliage, deep olive green, emerald green and cobalt blue with cranes in the background and sunlit golden blue sky enhance the experience of the painting and its narrative, which brings the white hawk to the centrestage along with the delicately portrayed face of the sultan. Persian influence is evident in the treatment of the horse and rocks. The plants and dense landscape in the foreground are of native inspiration. The galloping horse generates energy, which visually activates the entire panoramic landscape. This painting is in the collection of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, Academy of Sciences, Leningrad, Russia.

Reprint 2026-27

RAGINI PATHAMSIKA OF RAGA HINDOLA



An intriguing work in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi, titled *Ragini Pathamsika of Raga Hindola*, an important member of the *Ragamala* family of the Indian musical mode, dates back to around 1590–95. Some scholars believe it to be from Bijapur, an important state of Deccan. Painting was a highly developed art form in the Deccani states, almost simultaneous with the development of the Mughal School of Painting. Persian influence is obvious in the painting. This is seen in the arabesque decoration on the surface of the two domes that delineate the upper part of the painting, where letters written in Devanagari script cover the space. Two beautifully dressed and bejewelled women are seen in the pavilion, while the third is seen outside it. The centrally placed female musician is playing an Indian instrument, which appears to be *veena*, while the other two on the sides appear to be accompanying with rhythmic sway of their bodies. The colours are vibrant. Red is dominant and is complimented by green. The figures may be said to be stylised in the sense that the character of their physiology, including the face has been almost constructed on formulaic details. Nearly all forms are deeply emphasied with dark line. This is interestingly observable in the mural paintings of Ajanta, too, which were painted centuries ago. What is also to be noted here is a dark elephant in the left hand corner, with a raised trunk, a delightful sign of welcome. Small in scale, the elephant creates visual interest and breaks the architectonic structuring.

© NCERT not to be republished

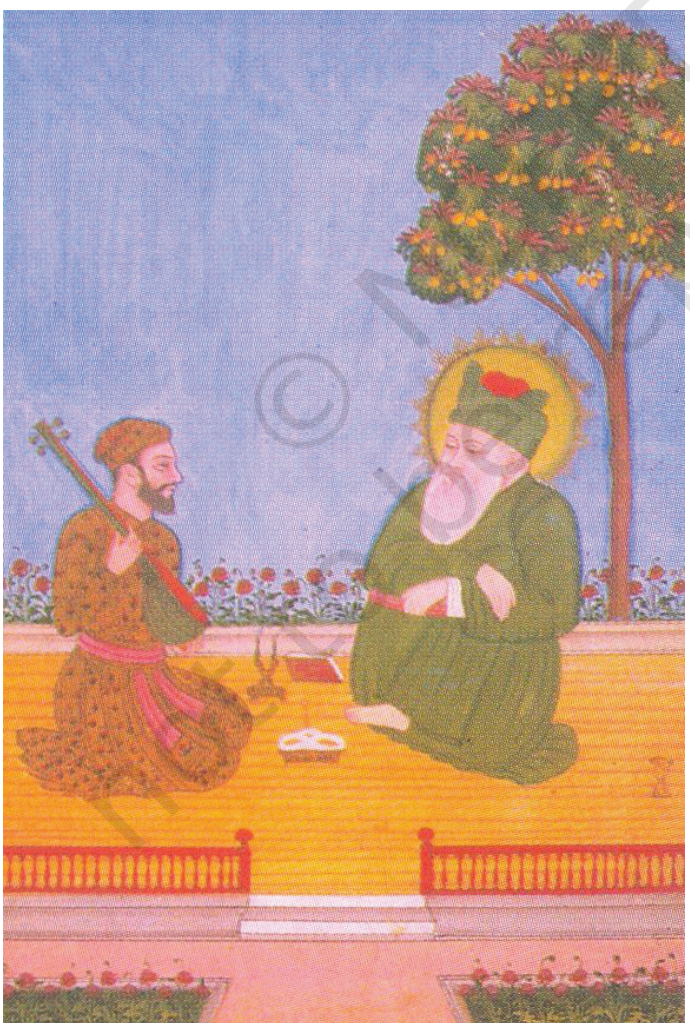
SULTAN ABDULLAH QUTB SHAH

An important portrait of Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah of Bijapur is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi, India. There is an inscription on the top in Persian. Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah was an able ruler of the famous Deccani state of Bijapur, which attracted scholars and artists from various parts of the world. Here, he is enthroned and we can see him holding the sword in one hand, symbolising his political sovereignty. Besides, a halo is seen around his head, which depicts his divinity.

© not to be republished

HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN AULIYA AND AMIR KHUSRAU

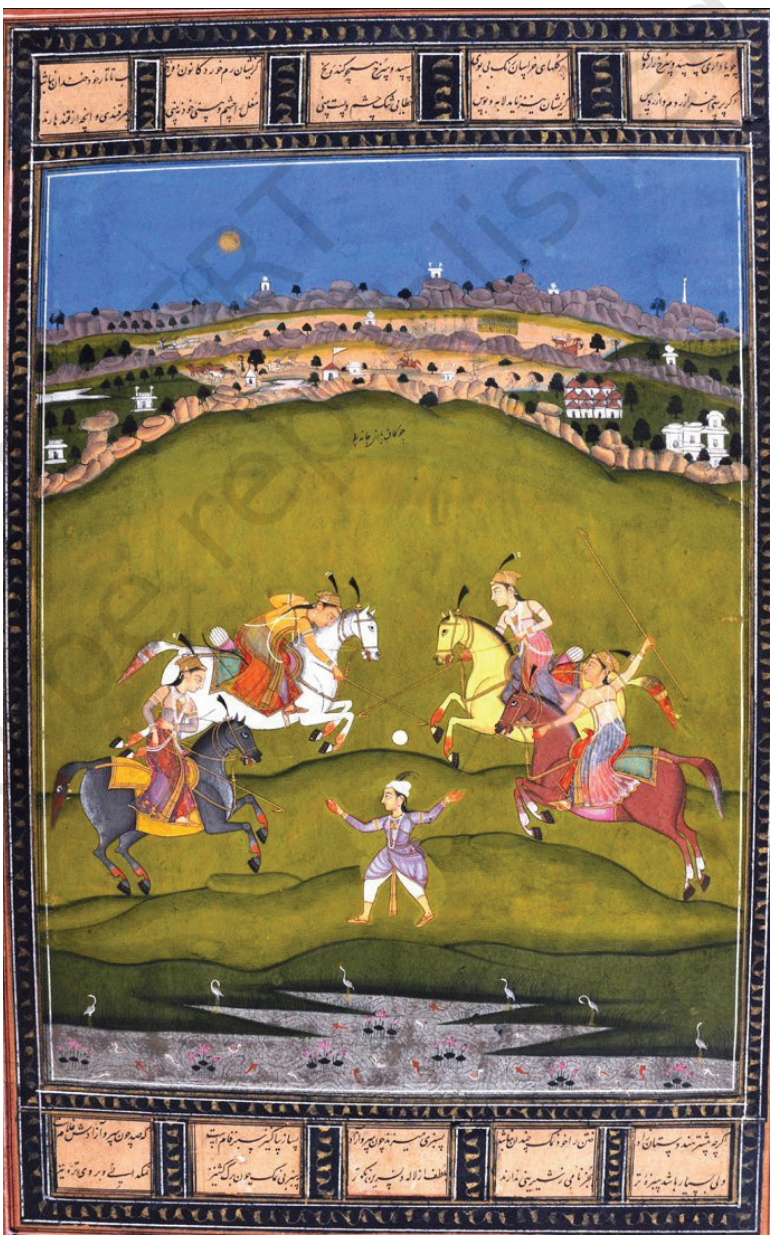
This provincial painting in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi, is from Hyderabad, Deccan. It depicts Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, the revered Sufi saint of the thirteenth century, listening to music being played by his disciple, Hazrat Amir Khusrau, a renowned Indian poet and scholar. Even to this day, the *dargah* of Hazrat Nizamudin Auliya in New Delhi has *qawwali* by Khusrau in praise of his *pir*. Devotees from all over the world come here to witness this regular cultural practice. The painting is naive and basic without technical and artistic sophistication of a court painting. However, it is charming and narrative of a popular Indian theme.



© NCERT not to be republished

CHAND BIBI PLAYING POLO

This painting shows Chand Bibi, the Queen of Bijapur, one of the most prosperous and culturally refined Deccani state. Chand Bibi resisted the Mughal political attempts to overtake the state by Emperor Akbar. A revered and accomplished ruler, Chand Bibi was a great sportsperson. Here, she is showing playing *chaugan*, the other name for equestrian polo game, a popular royal sport of the time. The painting appears to be provincial of much later period, and is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi, India.



© NCERT not to be republished

The Pahari Schools of Painting 5

Pahari denotes 'hilly or mountainous' in origin. Pahari Schools of Painting includes towns, such as Basohli, Guler, Kangra, Kullu, Chamba, Mankot, Nurpur, Mandi, Bilaspur, Jammu and others in the hills of western Himalayas, which emerged as centres of painting from seventeenth to nineteenth century. Beginning at Basohli with a coarsely flamboyant style, it blossomed into the most exquisite and sophisticated style of Indian painting known as the Kangra School, through the Guler or pre-Kangra phase.

Unlike the distinguishing stylistic features of Mughal, Deccani and Rajasthani Schools, Pahari paintings demonstrate challenges in their territorial classification.

Though all the above centres crafted precisely individualistic characteristics in painting (through the depiction of nature, architecture, figural types, facial features, costumes, preference for particular colours and such other things), they do not develop as independent schools with distinctive styles. Paucity of dated material, colophons and inscriptions also prevent informed categorisation.

Krishna steals butter, Bhagvata Purana, 1750, N. C. Mehta Collection, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

The emergence of the Pahari School remains unclear, though scholars have cautiously proposed theories concerning its beginning and influences. It is widely accepted that Mughal and Rajasthani styles of paintings were known in the hills probably through examples of Provincial Mughal style and family relationships of hill Rajas with the royal courts of Rajasthan. However, the flamboyantly bold Basohli-like style is, generally, understood to be the earliest prevailing pictorial language. B. N. Goswamy, one of the most significant scholars of the Pahari Schools of Painting, has attributed the shaping of Pahari style from

© NCERT not to be republished

the simplicity of Basohli to poetic lyricism and refinement of Kangra to the ingenuity of a family of artists through his scholarly approach of family as the basis of style. His central argument is that the family of Pandit Seu (Shiv) was chiefly responsible for the course of Pahari paintings. He argues that identifying Pahari paintings on the basis of regions could be misleading as political boundaries were always fluid. This argument is also true for Rajasthani schools as attribution merely by regions creates vagueness and several disparities remain unexplained. Hence, if a family of artists is considered as the style bearer, justification of multiple strands of a style can be accommodated within the same region and school.

Scholars agree that in the early eighteenth century, the style of the Seu family and others conformed to the Basohli idiom. However, from middle of the eighteenth century, the style transformed through a pre-Kangra phase, maturing into the Kangra style. This abrupt transformation in style and beginning of experimentation, which gave rise to varied stylistic idioms related to different Pahari centres, is largely ascribed to responses by various artist families and paintings (especially, the Mughal style) that were introduced in the Pahari kingdoms. This sudden arrival of paintings, which might have been introduced through rulers, artists, traders or any such agency or event, impacted local artists and profoundly influenced their painting language.

Rama and Sita in the forest, Kangra, 1780, Douglas Barrett Collection, UK

Most scholars, now, dispute the earlier hypothesis that the sudden change was caused and initiated by the migration of artists from the Mughal atelier.

For Goswamy, it was the naturalism in these paintings that appealed to the sensibilities of Pahari artists.

Compositions, worked out from a relative point of view, show some paintings with decorated margins. Themes that included recording the daily routine or important occasions from the lives of kings, creation of new prototype for female form and an idealised face, are all associated with this newly emerging style that gradually matures to the Kangra phase.

© NCERT not to be republished

Basohli School

The first and most dramatic example of work from the hill states is from Basohli. From 1678 to 1695, Kirpal Pal, an enlightened prince, ruled the state. Under him, Basohli developed a distinctive and magnificent style. It is characterised by a strong use of primary colours and warm yellows—filling the background and horizon, stylised treatment of vegetation and raised white paint for imitating the representation of pearls in ornaments. However, the most significant characteristic of Basohli painting is the use of small, shiny green particles of beetle wings to delineate jewellery and simulate the effect of emeralds. In their vibrant palette and elegance, they share the aesthetics of the Chaurpanchashika group of paintings of Western India.

The most popular theme of Basohli painters was the *Rasamanjari* of Bhanu Datta. In 1694–95, Devida, a *tarkhan* (carpenter–painter), did a magnificent series for his patron Kirpal Pal. *Bhagvata Purana* and *Ragamala* were other popular themes. Artists also painted portraits of local kings with their consorts, courtiers, astrologers, mendicants,

Rasamanjari, Basohli, 1720, British Museum, London, UK

© NCERT not to be republished

Rama gives away his possessions, Ayodhya Kanda, Shangri Ramayana, 1690–1700, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, USA

courtesans and others. While artist ateliers from Basohli, gradually, spread to other hill states, such as Chamba and Kullu, giving rise to local variations of the Basohli *kalam.* A new style of painting came in vogue during 1690s to 1730s, which was referred to as the Guler–Kangra phase. Artists during this period indulged in experimentation and improvisations that finally resulted and moulded into the Kangra style.

Hence, originating in Basohli, the style gradually spread to other hill states of Mankot, Nurpur, Kullu, Mandi, Bilaspur, Chamba, Guler and Kangra.

The Sanskrit epic, *Ramayana*, was one of the favourite texts of the hill artists at Basohli, as well as, Kullu. This set derives its name from 'Shangri', the place of residence of a branch of the Kullu royal family, patrons and formerly possessors of this set. These works of Kullu artists were influenced in varying degrees by the styles of Basohli and Bilaspur.

Rama learns of his exile and prepares to leave Ayodhya along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. Maintaining equanimity of mind, Rama indulges in his last acts of giving away his possessions. At the request of Rama, his brother piles up his belongings and the crowd begins to gather to receive the largesse of their beloved Rama—jewellery, sacrificial vessels, thousand cows and other treasures.

© NCERT not to be republished

Rama and Lakshmana following sage Vishvamitra to the forest, Bala Kanda, Shangri Ramayana 1680–1688, Raja Raghbir Singh Collection, Shangri, Kullu Valley, India

Set apart on the left are the two princes with Sita standing on a carpet with a crowd of recipients moving towards them. The painter carefully introduces different types—recluses, Brahmins, courtiers, commoners and servants of the royal household. The bounteous gifts represented are pile of gold coins and garments on the carpet, and cows and calves unaware of the momentous event, beseechingly looking at Rama with necks stretched, gazes fixed and mouths wide open. The gravity of the situation is sensitively portrayed through varying expressions—the serene but gently smiling Rama, curious Lakshmana, an apprehensive Sita, Brahmins willing to receive but with no pleasure, and others with expressions of disbelief and gratitude. Taking pleasure in achieving fine effects, the artist delightfully depicts transparency of the garment Rama is holding out, stippled beard on the cheek and chin of the Brahmins, *tilak* marks, jewellery and weapons.

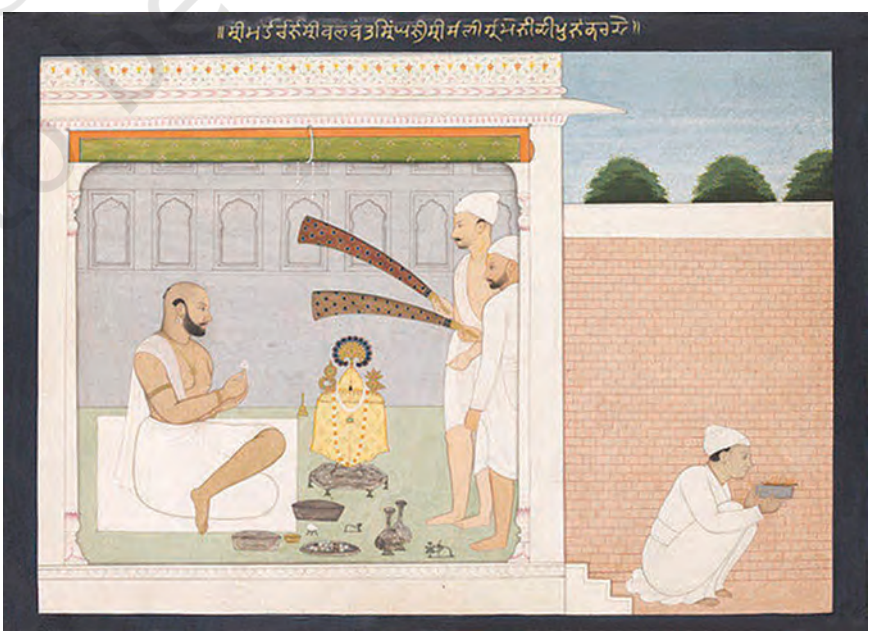
Another painting from the same set depicts Rama and Lakshmana accompanying sage Vishvamitra to the forest to defeat the demons, who would distress the hermits by disturbing their meditative practices and contaminating their rituals. An interesting feature of this painting is the representation of animals, stealthily prowling behind trees, half hidden in the heavy outgrowth. A clever fragmentary portrayal of a wolf on the left and a tiger on the right by

© NCERT not to be republished

the artist not only lends character to the forest as a thick impenetrable jungle, populated with ferocious animals hiding everywhere, but also adds an emotive value to the painting regarding the extraordinary courage of the two young princes. The fractional representation of animals adds mystery to the work as there is a possibility of them being demons in disguise.

Guler School

The first quarter of the eighteenth century saw a complete transformation in the Basohli style, initiating the Guler–Kangra phase. This phase first appeared in Guler, a high-ranking branch of the Kangra royal family, under the patronage of Raja Govardhan Chand (1744–1773). Guler artist Pandit Seu with his sons Manak and Nainsukh are attributed with changing the course of painting around 1730–40 to a new style, usually, referred to as the pre–Kangra or Guler–Kangra *kalam*. This style is more refined, subdued and elegant compared to the bold vitality of the Basohli style. Though initiated by Manak, also called Manaku, his brother Nainsukh, who became the court painter of Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota, is responsible for shaping the Guler School emphatically. The most matured version of this style entered Kangra during the 1780s, thus, developing into the Kangra School while the offshoots of Basohli continued in Chamba and Kullu, India.



Balwant Singh in prayer, Nainsukh, 1750, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK

© NCERT not to be republished

Sons and grandsons of Manak and Nainsukh worked at many other centres and are responsible for the finest examples of Pahari paintings.

Guler appears to have a long tradition of paintings amongst all Pahari schools. There is evidence that artists were working in Haripur–Guler ever since the reign of Dalip Singh (1695–1743) as many of his and his son Bishan Singh's portraits, dating back to earlier than 1730s, i.e., before the beginning of the Guler–Kangra phase can be found. Bishan Singh died during the lifetime of his father Dalip Singh. So, his younger brother Govardhan Chand ascended to the throne that witnessed a change in painting style.

Manak's most outstanding work is a set of *Gita Govinda* painted in 1730 at Guler, retaining some of the elements of the Basohli style, most strikingly the lavish use of beetle's wing casings.

Nainsukh appears to have left his hometown in Guler and moved to Jasrota. He is believed to have initially worked for Mian Zoravar Singh, whose son and successor Balwant Singh of Jasrota was to become his greatest patron. Nainsukh's celebrated pictures of Balwant Singh are unique in the kind of visual record they offer of the patron's life. Balwant Singh is portrayed engaged in various activities — performing *puja*, surveying a building site, sitting in a camp wrapped in a quilt because of the cold weather, and so on. The artist gratified his patron's obsession by painting him on every possible occasion. Nainsukh's genius was for individual portraiture that became a salient feature of the later Pahari style.

Krishna embracing gopis, Gita Govinda, Guler, 1760–1765, N. C. Mehta Collection, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

© NCERT not to be republished

His palette comprised delicate pastel shades with daring expanses of white or grey.

Manaku, too, did numerous portraits of his enthusiastic patron Raja Govardhan Chand and his family. Prakash Chand, successor of Govardhan Chand, shared his father's passion for art and had sons of Manaku and Nainsukh, Khushala, Fattu and Gaudhu as artists in his court.

Kangra School

Painting in the Kangra region blossomed under the patronage of a remarkable ruler, Raja Sansar Chand (1775–1823). It is believed that when Prakash Chand of Guler came under grave financial crisis and could no longer maintain his atelier, his master artist, Manaku, and his sons took service under Sansar Chand of Kangra.

Sansar Chand ascended to the throne at the tender age of 10 years after the kingdom had been restored to its earlier glory by his grandfather Ghamand Chand. They belonged to the Katoch dynasty of rulers, who had been ruling the Kangra region for a long time until Jahangir conquered their territory in the seventeenth century and made them his vassals. After the decline of the Mughal power, Raja Ghamand Chand recovered most of the territory and founded his capital town of Tira Sujanpur on the banks of river Beas and constructed fine monuments. He also maintained an atelier of artists.

Kaliya Mardana, Bhagvata Purana, Kangra, 1785, National Museum, New Delhi, India

© NCERT not to be republished

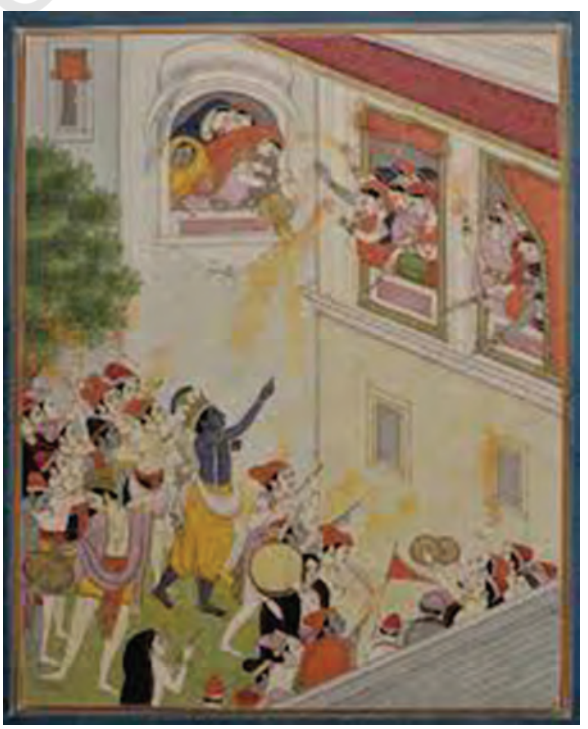
Raja Sansar Chand established supremacy of Kangra over all surrounding hill states. Tira Sujanpur emerged as the most prolific centre of painting under his patronage. An earlier phase of Kangra *kalam* paintings is witnessed in Alampur and the most matured paintings were painted at Nadaun, where Sansar Chand shifted later in his life. All these centres were on the banks of river Beas. Alampur along with river Beas can be recognised in some paintings. Less number of paintings was done in Kangra as it remained under the Mughals till 1786, and later, the Sikhs.

Sansar Chand's son Aniruddha Chand (1823–1831), too, was a generous patron and is often seen painted with his courtiers.

The Kangra style is by far the most poetic and lyrical of Indian styles marked with serene beauty and delicacy of execution. Characteristic features of the Kangra style are delicacy of line, brilliance of colour and minuteness of decorative details. Distinctive is the delineation of the female face, with straight nose in line with the forehead, which came in vogue around the 1790s is the most distinctive feature of this style.

Most popular themes that were painted were the *Bhagvata Purana*, *Gita Govinda*, *Nala Damayanti*, *Bihari Satsai*, *Ragamala* and *Baramasa*. Many other paintings comprise a pictorial record of Sansar Chand and his court. He is shown sitting by the riverside, listening to music, watching dancers, presiding over festivals, practising tent pegging and archery, drilling troops, and so on and forth. Fattu, Purkhu and Khushala are important painters of the Kangra style.

Krishna playing Holi with gopis, Kangra, 1800, National Museum, New Delhi, India



During Sansar Chand's reign, the production of Kangra School was far greater than any other hill state. He exercised wide political power and was able to support a large studio with artists from Guler and other areas. The Kangra style soon spread from Tira Sujanpur to Garhwal in the east and Kashmir in the west. Painting activity was severely affected around 1805 when the Gurkhas besieged the Kangra fort and Sansar Chand had to flee to his hill palace at Tira Sujanpur. In 1809, with

© NCERT not to be republished

the help of Ranjit Singh, the Gurkhas were driven away. Though Sansar Chand continued to maintain his atelier of artists, the work no longer paralleled masterpieces of the period 1785–1805.

This series of *Bhagvata Purana* paintings is one of the greatest achievements of Kangra artists. It is remarkable for its effortless naturalism, deft and vivid rendering of figures in unusual poses that crisply portray dramatic scenes. The principal master is believed to have been a descendent of Nainsukh, commanding much of his skill.

Re-enacting Krishna's deeds, Bhagvata Purana, Guler–Kangra, India, 1780–85, Private Collection

This painting is a depiction from *Rasa Panchdhyayi*, a group of five chapters from the *Bhagvata Purana* devoted to the philosophical concept of *Rasa*. It has passages that speak movingly of the love that *gopis* have for Krishna. Their pain is real when Krishna suddenly disappears. In their forlorn state of separation, they appear utterly devastated with the fruitlessness of search when the deer, trees or creepers, whom they address in their distracted state, do not have answers to their piteous questions regarding the whereabouts of Krishna.

With minds engrossed in thoughts of Krishna, the *gopis* recall and enact his various *lilas* or feats. Some of them being—the killing of Putana, liberation of Yamala–Arjun after Krishna was tied to a mortar by Yashoda, lifting of Mount Govardhan and rescuing the inhabitants of Braj from the heavy downpour and wrath of Indra, subduing of serpent

© NCERT not to be republished

Kaliya, and the intoxicating call and allure of Krishna's flute. The *gopis* take on different roles and emulate his divine sports.

The artist captures and evokes these sensitive images exquisitely in this folio. On the extreme left, a *gopi* enacts Krishna's part as she bends forward and appears to suck the bosom of another *gopi,* who plays the role of Putana and raises her hand to the head in response, as if dying while her breath is being sucked away. Next to them, another *gopi* enacts the character of Yashoda, who along with other *gopis*, holds out her garment in a gesture of removing the evil eye after the young Krishna performed the brave feat of killing Putana.

In the group beside this towards the right, a *gopi* enacts the mortar to which another *gopi*, who plays the role of young Krishna, is tied with a cloth band, while his mother admonishingly stands holding a stick in her hands. In the adjoining group, a *gopi*, sporting a turban, lifts her piled up *odhni* atop in the guise of lifting Mount Govardhan, while others seek protection underneath. To the extreme left in the bottom, a *gopi* enacts Krishna, who is playing flute, as some *gopis* dance and sing, and others crawl towards him, disentangling themselves from their angry mothers-in-law, who try to drag and hold them back from going. In the most magnificent of these cameos to the extreme bottom in the right, a *gopi* hurls a blue garment edged with gold over the ground, which takes the form of the multiple hooded serpent Kaliya, upon whom she dances like Krishna.

Abhisarika Nayika, Kangra, 1810–20, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, India

Depiction of *Ashta Nayikas* or eight heroines is one of the most painted themes in Pahari paintings, involving the depiction of women in various dispositions and emotive states. To mention a few—*Utka* is the one who is anticipating the arrival of her beloved and patiently waits for him, *Svandhinpatika* is the one whose husband is subject to her will, *Vasaksajja* awaits her beloved's return from a voyage and decorates the bed with flowers in a welcoming gesture, and *Kalahantarita* is the one who resists her beloved when he seeks to soften her pride and repents when he comes late.

© NCERT not to be republished

A couple in the month of Jyestha, Kangra, 1800, National Museum, New Delhi, India

Even though describing *Ashta Nayikas* remained a favourite among poets and painters, none of them is treated with as much flair as the *Abhisarika*, one who hastens to meet her beloved braving all hazards. The situation conceived is, generally, full of bizarre and dramatic possibilities with the passion and steadfastness of the *nayika,* triumphing against the opposing elements of nature.

In this painting, the *sakhi* is recounting how the *nayika* crossed the woods in the night to meet her beloved. The *yoga*, the poet speaks of, refers to the single-mindedness of purpose with which the *nayika* moves through the dark forest in the night.

The broad iconography of the *Abhisarika* remains much the same. However, at times, painters vary their renderings in some measure. The *ghouls* that, usually, appear in many versions are omitted here. But the darkness of the night, flashes of lighting, murky clouds, snakes hissing about in the dark, emerging from hollows of the trees and falling jewellery are all painted.

The *Baramasa* paintings, consisting of 12 folios, illustrating the modes of love or courtship appropriate to each month of the year had become a popular theme in the hills during the nineteenth century.

An account of *Baramasa* is given by Keshav Das in the tenth chapter of *Kavipriya*. He, thus, describes the hot month of *Jyeshtha*, which falls in the months of May and June. The painter takes utmost delight in depicting all analogues as described by the poet.

The Kangra School came to fore in the 1780s while the offshoots of the Basohli style emerged and continued in centres such as Chamba, Kullu, Nurpur, Mankot, Jasrota, Mandi, Bilaspur, Jammu and others with some of their specific characteristics. In Kashmir (1846–1885), the Kangra style initiated a local school of Hindu book illumination. The Sikhs employed other Kangra painters eventually.

There is a broad classification of three styles—Basohli, Guler and Kangra, and scholars may have variant terms for the same. However, these are indicative centres from where the style travels elsewhere. Hence, in Jasrota, as one observes the Guler style, it becomes categorised under the Guler

© NCERT not to be republished

School with Jasrota as one of its centres. Briefly mentioning the aspects of the other centres, one finds portraits of the rulers of Chamba in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century in the Basohli style.

Kullu emerged with a distinctive style, where figures had a prominent chin and wide open eyes, and lavish use of grey and terracotta red colours in the background was made. *Shangri Ramayana* is a well-known set painted in the Kullu Valley in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Paintings of this set vary from each other in style, and, thus it is believed that these were painted by different sets of artists. It is believed that when the Basohli style had outgrown itself and matured into the Kangra style, Nurpur artists retained the vibrant colours of Basohli with the dainty figure types of Kangra.

Due to marital relations between Basohli and Mankot, few artists from Basohli seem to have shifted to Mankot, thereby, developing a similar school of painting. While Jasrota had an indulgent patron in Balwant Singh and the school is well-known through his numerous portraits painted by his court artist, Nainsukh, who led the earlier simple Basohli style to new sophistication. This style of Nainsukh is also referred to as the Guler–Kangra style.

Rulers of Mandi were ardent worshippers of Vishnu and Shiva. Hence, apart from the *Krishna Lila* themes, Shaivite subjects were also painted. An artist named Molaram is associated with the Garhwal School. Several signed paintings by him have been discovered. This school was influenced by the Kangra style of Sansar Chand phase.

© NCERT not to be republished

EXERCISE

1. Representation of nature in Pahari miniature paintings is found everywhere. According to you, what could be the reasons for this?
2. What are the major schools of Pahari miniature paintings and list their places of expansion. How were they different from each other? Mark all schools of Himalayan (*Pahari*) paintings on a map.
3. Select a poem or a story and illustrate in it any style of Pahari miniature painting.
4. Prepare small critiques on works of the following.
   (a) Nainsukh (b) Basohali paintings
   (c) *Ashta Nayikas* (d) Kangra *kalam*

AWAITING KRISHNA AND THE HESITANT RADHA

Artist Pandit Seu had two talented sons, Manak or Manaku and Nainsukh. Their contribution in maneuvering the style of Pahari painting from the stage of Basohli to that of Kangra is immense. Their sons, in turn, represent the glorious period of Kangra. This painting is categorised in the Guler–Kangra phase, wherein, experimentation for change had already been initiated.

Gita Govinda is Manaku's most outstanding set of works. As mentioned earlier, composed by Jayadeva, *Gita Govinda* begins with the description of how Radha and Krishna fall in love on the banks of river Yamuna. A delightful description of spring follows and the poet describes the sports of Krishna with other *gopis*. Ignored by Krishna, heartbroken Radha sulks in a bower as her friend, *sakhi,* describes how Krishna continues to wander with the pretty cowherd girls. After sometime, Krishna feels remorseful and starts looking for Radha, and on not finding her, laments for her. The messenger, now, goes to Radha and tells her of the longing of Krishna for her. Ultimately, she persuades her to meet him and what follows is the mystic union. Though the characters are divine and enact the play at a philosophical plane, where Radha is a devotee or soul, and Krishna, the cosmic power, in whom she is to be drowned. The love sport played here is rather human.

In this painting, Radha is shown feeling shy and hesitant as she approaches the forested area, while Krishna is seen eagerly waiting for her.

The source to the artist's imagination is the inscription on the reverse of the painting, which is translated as follows.

"Radha! *Sakhis* have come to know the secret that your soul is intent on the warfare of love. Now, abandon your shyness, let your girdle tinkle merrily and go ahead to meet your beloved. Radha! Lead yourself with some favoured maid; grasp her hands with your fingers that are soft and smooth as love's arrows. March and let the jingle of your bangles proclaim your approach to your loved one."

This beautiful song of Jayadeva may always rest upon the lips of the devotees of Krishna.

Ultimately Radha accepts the advice of her companions and Jayadeva, thus, describes the following.

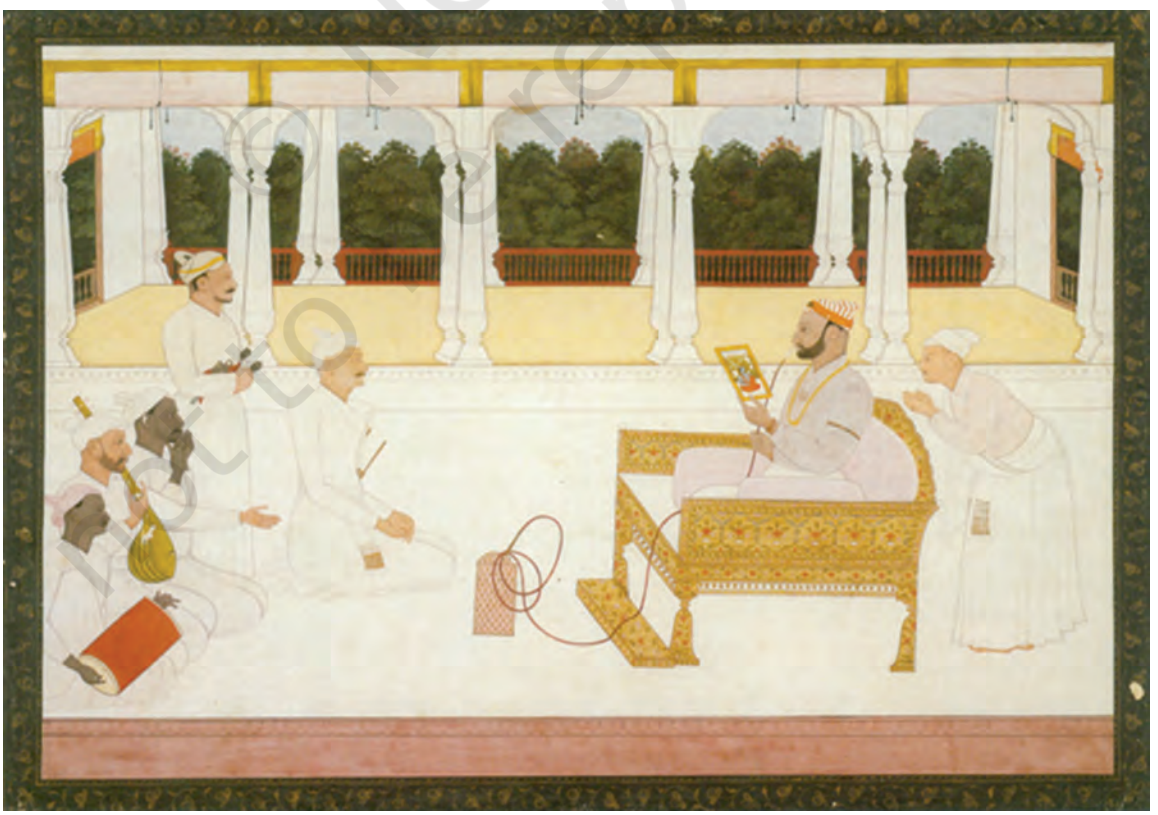
"Then, she, no more delaying, entered straight; her step a little faltered, but her face shone with unutterable love; the music of her bangles passed the entrance; shame which had lingered in her downcast eyes, departed shamed…"

© NCERT not to be republished

BALWANT SINGH LOOKING AT A PAINTING WITH NAINSUKH

The painting depicts Prince Balwant Singh of Jasrota closely observing a painting that he is holding in his hands. A figure standing behind him politely bowing down probably represents none other than the artist of the painting, Nainsukh. This painting is probably a rare, where Nainsukh paints himself with his patron.

Balwant Singh is seated in his palace, overlooking the lush green landscape teeming with trees. The time depicted appears to be that of early evening and Nainsukh's clutter-free composition is itself indicative of quietude, peace and tranquillity that are suggestive of Balwant Singh's temperament in the painting. He is smoking *hukka,* something that, he usually, indulged in during spells of break between work. Musicians are deftly placed towards the outer edge of the painting so as to indicate their presence. Their positioning, in the painting, suggests that they are not clamouring to be heard but 'softly' producing music, thus, enhancing the calmness, while Balwant Singh remains engrossed in the details of the painting that depicts Krishna.



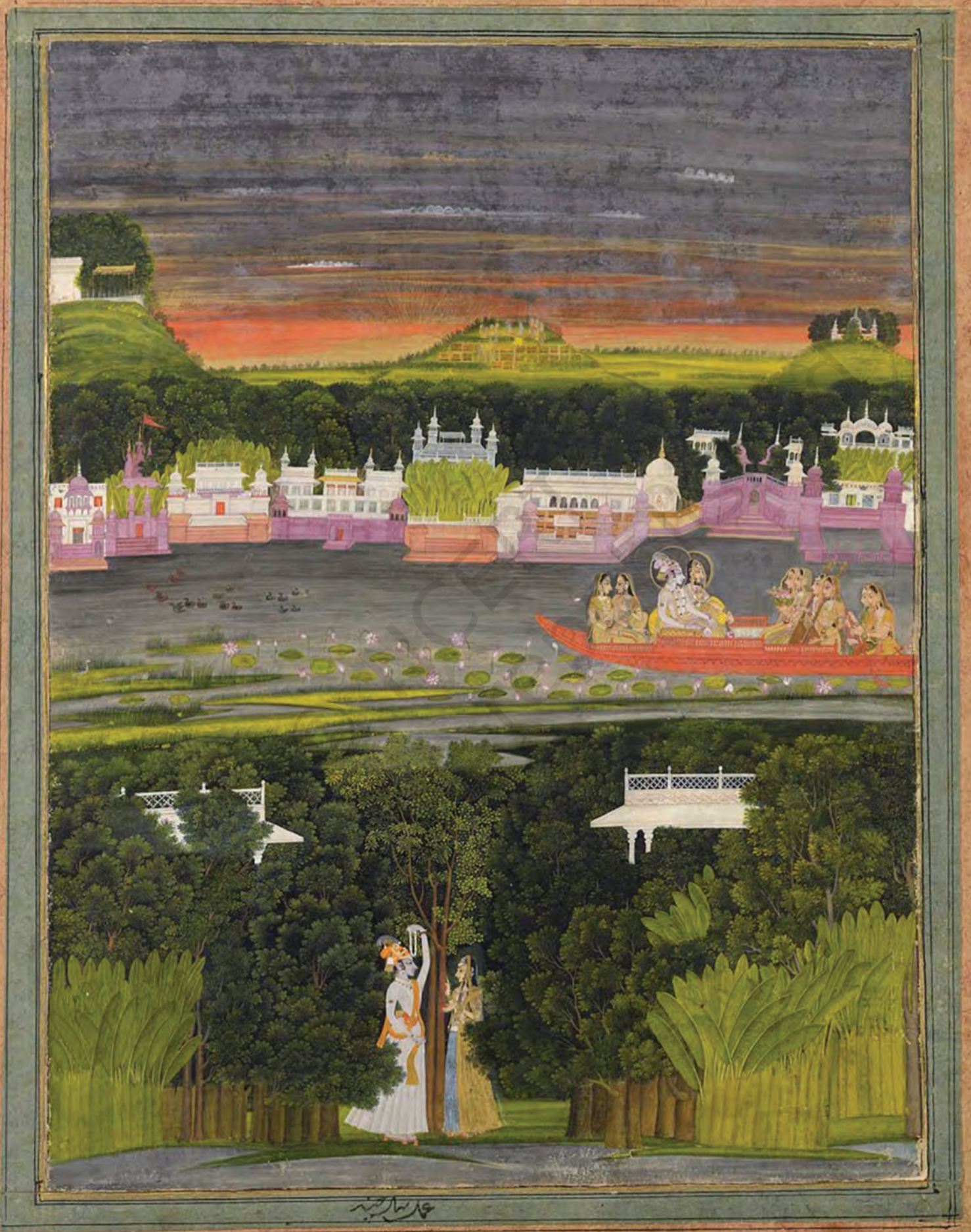
© NCERT not to be republished

NANDA, YASHODA AND KRISHNA

This painting also illustrates a scene from the *Bhagvata Purana* and depicts Nanda with his family and relatives, travelling to Vrindavan. They found Gokul infested with demons that bothered Krishna to no end, and hence, decided to move to a safer place. In the painting, Nanda is seen leading the group on his bullock cart and is followed by another bullock cart, wherein, both brothers, Krishna and Balaram and their respective mothers, Yashoda and Rohini, are seated. Men and women carrying various household items and children are seen accompanying them. Detailing in their expressions, the activities they are indulging in are intriguing. The tilt of their heads as they talk to each other, an expression of fatigue expressed with downcast eyes because of the heaviness of load on the head and the taut stretching of arms as one firmly holds on to the vessel on the head are all examples of amazing observation and excellent skill.

Kangra painters, as discussed in the earlier part of the chapter, acutely observe the landscape and represent it naturalistically. The details are eloquently expressed. One also observes a flush-cut composition, resembling a photograph, which lends naturalism to the painting.

© NCERT not to be republished



The Bengal School and Cultural Nationalism

6

Company Painting

12144CH06

Art in India had a different purpose prior to the coming of the British. It could be seen as statues on temple walls, miniature paintings that often illustrated manuscripts, decoration on the walls of mud houses in villages, among many other examples. With the colonial rule around the eighteenth century, the English were charmed by different manners and customs of people of all ranks, tropical flora and fauna, and varying locales. Partly for documentation and partly for artistic reasons, many English officers commissioned local artists to paint scenes around them to get a better idea of the natives. The paintings were largely made on paper by local artists, some of whom had migrated from erstwhile courts of Murshidabad, Lucknow or Delhi. To please their new patrons, they had to adapt their traditional way of painting to document the world around them. This meant that they had to rely more on close observation, a striking feature of the European art, rather than memory and rule books, as seen in traditional art. It is this mixture of traditional and European style of painting that came to be known as the Company School of Painting. This style was not only popular among the British in India but even in Britain, where albums, consisting a set of paintings were much in demand.

Ghulam Ali Khan, Group of Courtesans, Company Painting, 1800–1825. San Diego Museum of Art, California, USA

© NCERT not to be republished

Raja Ravi Varma,
Krishna as envoy,
1906. NGMA, New Delhi, India

Raja Ravi Varma

This style declined with the entry of photography in India in the mid–nineteenth century as camera offered a better way of documentation. What, However, flourished in the art schools set up by the British was the academic style of oil painting that used a European medium to depict Indian subject matter. The most successful examples of this type of painting were found away from these art schools. They are best seen in the works produced by self-taught artist, Raja Ravi Varma of the Travancore Court in Kerala. By imitating copies of European paintings popular in Indian palaces, he mastered the style of academic realism and used it to depict scenes from popular epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. They became so popular that many of his paintings were copied as oleographs and were sold in market. They even entered people's homes as calendar images. With the rise of nationalism in India by the end of the nineteenth century, this academic style embraced by Raja Ravi Varma came to be looked down upon as foreign and too western to show Indian myths and history. It is amidst such nationalist thinking that the Bengal School of Art emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The Bengal School

The term 'Bengal School of Art' is not fully accurate. It is true that the first move to create a modern, nationalist school happened in Bengal but it was not restricted to this region alone. It was an art movement and a style of painting that originated in Calcutta, the centre of British power, but later influenced many artists in different parts of the country, including Shantiniketan, where India's first national art school was founded. It was associated with the nationalist movement (*Swadeshi*) and spearheaded by Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951). Abanindranath enjoyed the support of British administrator and principal of the Calcutta School of Art, E. B. Havell (1861–1934). Both Abanindranath and Havell were critical of colonial Art Schools and the manner in which European taste in art was being imposed on Indians. They firmly believed in creating a new type of painting that

© NCERT not to be republished

was Indian not only in subject matter but also in style. For them, Mughal and Pahari miniatures, for example, were more important sources of inspiration, rather than either the Company School of Painting or academic style taught in the colonial Art Schools.

Abanindranath Tagore and E. B. Havell

The year 1896 was important in the Indian history of visual arts. E. B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore saw a need to Indianise art education in the country. This began in the Government Art School, Calcutta, now, Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata. Similar art schools were established in Lahore, Bombay and Madras but their primary focus was on crafts like metalwork, furniture and curios. However, the one in Calcutta was more inclined towards fine arts. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore designed a curriculum to include and encourage technique and themes in Indian art traditions. Abanindranath's *Journey's End* shows the influence of Mughal and Pahari miniatures, and his desire to create an Indian style in painting.

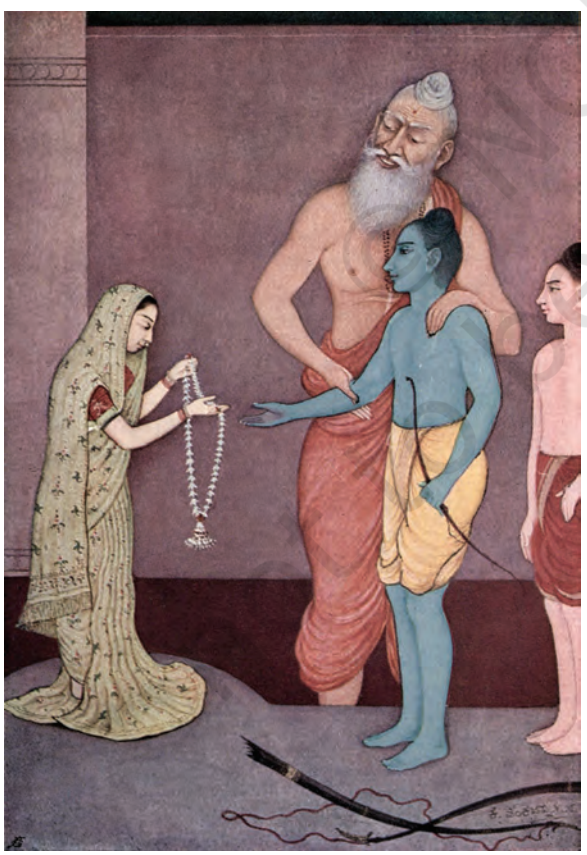
Art historian Partha Mitter writes, "The first generation of the students of Abanindranath engaged in recovering the lost language of Indian art." To create awareness that modern Indians could benefit from this rich past, Abanindranath was the main artist and creator of an important journal, *Indian Society of Oriental Art*. In this manner, he was also the first major supporter of *Swadeshi* values in Indian art, which best manifested in the creation of Bengal School of Art. This school set the stage for the development of modern Indian painting. The new direction opened by Abanindranath was followed by many younger artists like Kshitindranath Majumdar (*Rasa-Lila*) and M. R. Chughtai (*Radhika*).

Shantiniketan — Early modernism

Nandalal Bose, a student of Abanindranath Tagore, was invited by poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore to head the painting department in the newly established Kala Bhavana. Kala Bhavana was India's first national art school. It was part of the Visva-Bharati University founded by Rabindranath Tagore at Shantiniketan. At Kala Bhavana, Nandalal founded the intellectual and artistic milieu to create an Indian style in art. By paying attention to the folk art forms that he saw around in Shantiniketan, he began to focus on

© NCERT not to be republished

Nandalal Bose, Dhaki, Haripura Posters, 1937. NGMA, New Delhi, India



K. Venkatappa, Rama's marriage, 1914. Private Collection, India

the language of art. He also illustrated primers in Bengali with woodcuts and understood the role of art in teaching new ideas. For this reason, Mahatma Gandhi invited him to paint panels that were put on display at the Congress session at Haripura in 1937. Famously called the 'Haripura Posters', they depicted ordinary rural folks busy in various activities — a musician drumming, a farmer tilling, a woman churning milk, and so on. They were painted as lively colourful sketchy figures and shown as contributing their labour to nation building. These posters echoed with Gandhi's socialist vision of including marginalised sections of Indian society through art.

Kala Bhavana, the institution where Bose taught art, inspired many young artists to carry forward this nationalist vision. It became a training ground for many artists, who taught art in different parts of the country. K. Venkatappa in South India being a prominent example. They wanted art to reach out to a wider public rather than only the elite, anglicised class of people.

Jamini Roy is a unique example of modern Indian artist, who after undergoing academic training in the colonial Art School rejected it only to adopt the flat and colourful style of folk painting seen in villages. He wanted his paintings to be simple and easy to duplicate to reach a wider public and based on themes like women and children, specifically, and rural life, generally.

However, the struggle between the Indian and European taste in art continued as seen in the art policy of the British Raj. For example, the project for mural decorations for Lutyen's Delhi buildings went to the students of Bombay School of Art, trained in realistic studies by its Principal, Gladstone Solomon. On the other hand, the Bengal School artists were allowed to decorate the Indian House in London under close British supervision.

© NCERT not to be republished

Pan-Asianism and Modernism

The colonial art policy had created a divide between those who liked the European academic style and those who favoured Indian style. But following the Partition of Bengal in 1905, the *Swadeshi* movement was at its peak and it reflected in ideas about art. Ananda Coomaraswamy, an important art historian, wrote about *Swadeshi* in art and joined hands with a Japanese nationalist, Kakuzo Okakura, who was visiting Rabindranath Tagore in Calcutta. He came to India with his ideas about pan-Asianism, by which he wanted to unite India with other eastern nations and fight against western imperialism. Two Japanese artists accompanied him to Calcutta, who went to Shantiniketan to teach wash technique of painting to Indian students as an alternative to western oil painting.

If, on one hand, pan-Asianism was gaining popularity, ideas about modern European art also travelled to India. Hence, the year 1922 may be regarded as a remarkable one, when an important exhibition of works by Paul Klee, Kandinsky and other artists, who were part of the Bauhaus School in Germany, travelled to Calcutta. These European artists had rejected academic realism, which appealed to the *Swadeshi* artists. They created a more abstract language of art, consisting of squares, circles, lines and colour patches. For the first time, Indian artists and the public had a direct encounter with modern art of this kind. It is in the paintings by Gaganendranath Tagore, brother of Abanindranath Tagore, that the influence of modern western style of paintings can be clearly seen. He made several paintings using Cubist style, in which building interiors were created out of geometric patterns. Besides, he was deeply interested in making caricatures, in which he often made fun of rich Bengalis blindly following the European style of living.

Different Concepts of Modernism: Western and Indian

The divide between anglicists and orientalists, as mentioned earlier, was not based on race. Take the case of the Bengali intellectual, Benoy Sarkar, who sided with the anglicists and considered modernism that was growing in Europe as authentic in an article, 'The Futurism of Young Asia'. For him, the Oriental Bengal School of Art was regressive and anti-modern. On the other hand, it was E. B. Havell, an Englishman, who was in favour of return to native art to

© NCERT not to be republished

Amrita Sher-Gil, Camels, 1941.
NGMA, New Delhi, India

create a true modern Indian art. It is in this context that we have to view his collaboration with Abanindranath Tagore.

Amrita Sher-Gil, whom we will discuss in the next chapter, is a perfect example of the meeting of both these points of view. She used the kind of style that the Bauhaus exhibition showed to depict Indian scenes.

Modern art in India can be best understood as a result of the conflict between colonialism and nationalism. Colonialism introduced new institutions of art like art schools, exhibition galleries, art magazines and art societies. Nationalist artists, while accepting these changes, continued to assert more Indian taste in art and even accepted a larger Asian identity for a while. This legacy was going to leave a deep impact on the later history of modern Indian art. Therefore, it will keep moving from internationalism, i.e., draw ideas from the West, and indigenous, i.e., to be true to one's own legacy and tradition.

EXERCISE

1. Collect a local newspaper of the past two weeks. Select images and text from these that you consider important in the life of modern democratic state of India. With the help of these visuals and texts, compile an album that narrates the story of an independent sovereign India in the contemporary world.
2. Comment on the importance of the Bengal School artists in the making of a national style of art?
3. Write your view on any one painting by Abanindranath Tagore.
4. Which art traditions of India inspired the Bengal School artists?
5. What were the themes that Jamini Roy painted after he abandoned the academic style of painting?

© NCERT not to be republished

TILLER OF THE SOIL

This is one of the panels made by Nandalal Bose in 1938 for the Haripura Congress. In this panel, a farmer is shown ploughing a field— the daily activity of a common man and in a village. To capture the essence of village life in his Haripura panels, Bose made pen-and-ink brush studies of local villagers. He used thick tempera in a bold cursory style and broad brushwork. This technique and style was reminiscent of the folk art practice of *patuas* or scroll painters. Folk style is purposely used to represent the rural life. It also conveys political statement of Gandhi's idea of village. The background of the poster has an arch. The strong senses of formal design, bold colour scheme, and their blend of nature and convention in this panel reflect Bose's inspiration from Ajanta wall paintings and sculptures. More than 400 posters were prepared at Kala Bhavana under the supervision of Bose, who was influenced by the idea of Gandhi. These posters place common people in the centre of nation building. Bose utilised art to build the nation's moral character.

© NCERT not to be republished

RASA-LILA

This is a watercolour painting in wash technique portraying the divine life of Sri Krishna made by Kshitindranath Majumdar (1891–1975). He was one of the early students of Abanindranath Tagore, who carried forward the wash tradition with some deviations. Rustic, thin, slender figures, modest gestures, idyllic settings and delicate watercolours express his stylistic features. He has painted mythological and religious subjects. Man Bhanjan of Radha, Sakhi and Radha, Lakshmi and Birth of Sri Chaitanya are few examples of his extraordinary power of expression inspired by his understanding of religious concepts as a follower of the Bhakti Marga. In this painting, Krishna is dancing with Radha and *sakhis,* and the background of trees creates a simple village atmosphere as illustrated in the *Bhagvata Purana* and *Gita Govinda*. Figures and their cloths are drawn with simple, flowing, delicate lines. The sublime moods of characters are captured well. Krishna and *gopis* are drawn with same proportion. Thus, humans and God are brought on the same level.

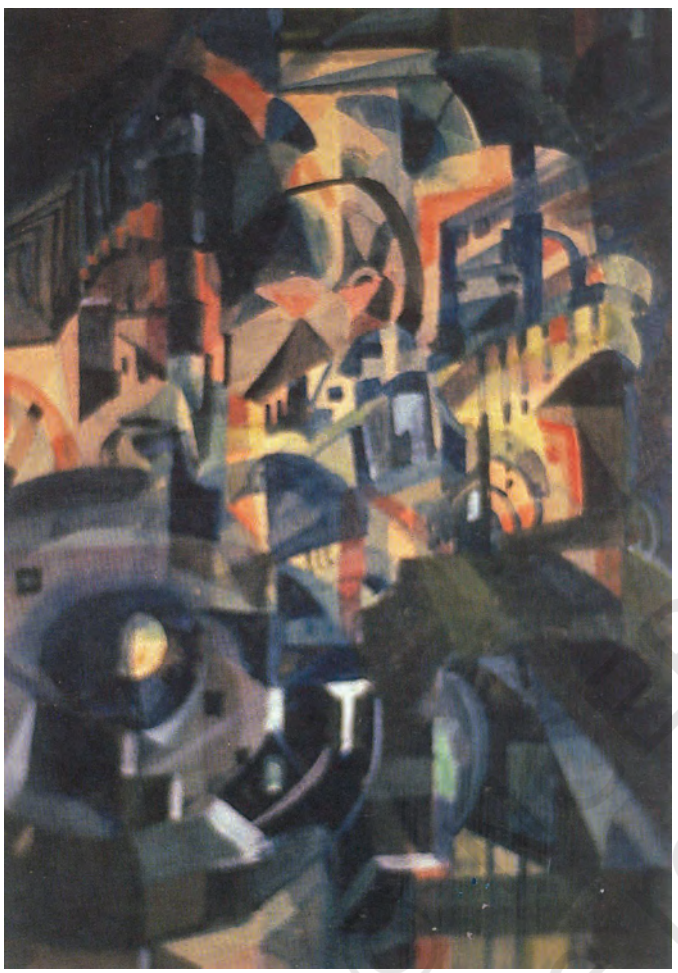
© NCERT not to be republished

RADHIKA

This is a wash and tempera painting made on paper by Abdul Rehman Chughtai (1899–1975). He was a descendant of Ustad Ahmed, the chief architect of Shahjahan. He was also the designer of the Jama Masjid and Red Fort in Delhi and Taj Mahal in Agra. He was influenced by Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose. Chughtai experimented with wash technique and infused a distinct character of calligraphic line, typical in Mughal manuscripts and old Persian paintings. It gives a deeper sensuous quality to his paintings. In this painting, Radhika is portrayed walking away from a lighted lamp in a gloomy background as if in a state of trance or remorse. The subject is based on Hindu mythology. He also painted characters from legends, folklore and history of the Indo-Islamic, Rajput and Mughal world. The light and shade of the background represent the finest heights of simplification. Chughtai had stylistic affinities with renowned Chinese and Japanese masters. The character is drawn gracefully, with a lyrical quality of calligraphy in every line. It is as if a poem finds visual form. Other works, which carry these poetic qualities, are *Gloomy Radhika*, *Omar Khayyam*, *Dream*, *Hiraman Tota*, *Lady under a Tree*, *Musician Lady*, *Man behind a Tomb*, *Lady beside a Grave* and *Lady lighting a Lamp*.

© NCERT not to be republished

CITY IN THE NIGHT



This is a watercolour painting made by Gaganendranath Tagore (1869–1938) in 1922. He was one of the earlier Indian painters, who made use of language and syntax of Cubism to render his ideas. The inner experiences of turbulence are externalised through a blend of allegorical and formal, transforming the static geometry of Analytical Cubism into an expressive apparatus. He softened Cubism's formal geometry with a seductive profile, shadow or outline of human form. He visualised the mysterious world of his imaginary cities like Dwarka (Lord Krishna's legendary abode) or Swarnapuri (The Golden City) through multiple viewpoints, multi-faceted shapes and jagged edges of Cubism. He painted an interplay of diamond-shaped planes and prismatic colours, resulting in fragmented luminosity to render the mountain ranges of the city. Zigzag planes together are able to create a tight formal structure of the painting. The painting is mysteriously illuminated by artificial light, one of the features of theatre. It shows his involvement with his uncle Rabindranath Tagore's play staged in their house. The painter has taken many references of stage props, partition screens, overlapping planes and artificial stage lighting. Endless corridors, pillars, halls, half-open doors, screens, illuminated windows, staircases and vaults are painted on the same plane to conjure a magic world.

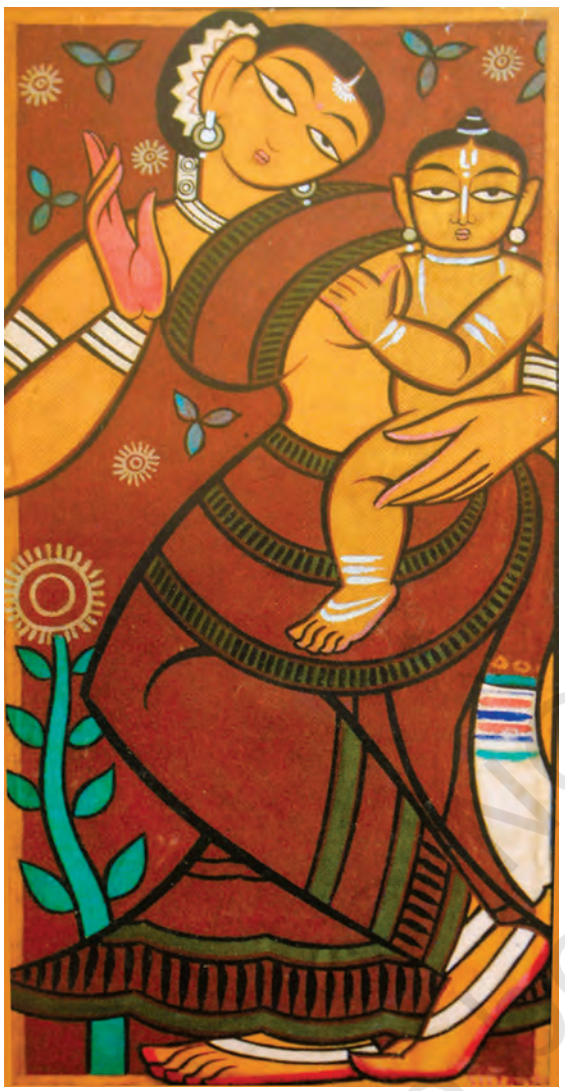
© NCERT not to be republished

RAMA VANQUISHING THE PRIDE OF THE OCEAN

This is a Puranic (ancient mythological stories) theme painted by Raja Ravi Varma. He was one of the first Indian painters to use oil paint and master the art of lithographic reproduction for mythological subject. These paintings are, generally, large ones, depicting a historic moment or scene from an epic or a classical text, painted in the midst of a dramatic action. It is intended to be noble, momentous and emotional. This scene is taken from *Valmiki Ramayana*, where Rama needs to build a bridge in southern India to the island of Lanka for his army to cross the ocean. He prays to the God of Ocean, Varuna, to permit him to cross the ocean but Varuna does not respond. Then, in anger, Rama stands to shoot his fiery arrow into the ocean. Immediately, Varuna appears and appeases Rama. The event depicted in this painting sequentially serves as a springboard for the next one. The story unfolds itself as each painting leaps to the succeeding one, covering in the process not only the major moments in the lives of Rama and Sita but the entire epic. Varma also painted *Release of Ahalya*, *Rama Breaking the Sacred Bow of Siva before his Marriage to Sita*, *Rama, Sita and Laksmana Crossing the Saryu*, *Ravana abducting Sita and Opposed by Jatayu*, *Sita in Ashoka Grove*, *The Coronation of Rama*, etc.

© NCERT not to be republished

WOMAN WITH CHILD



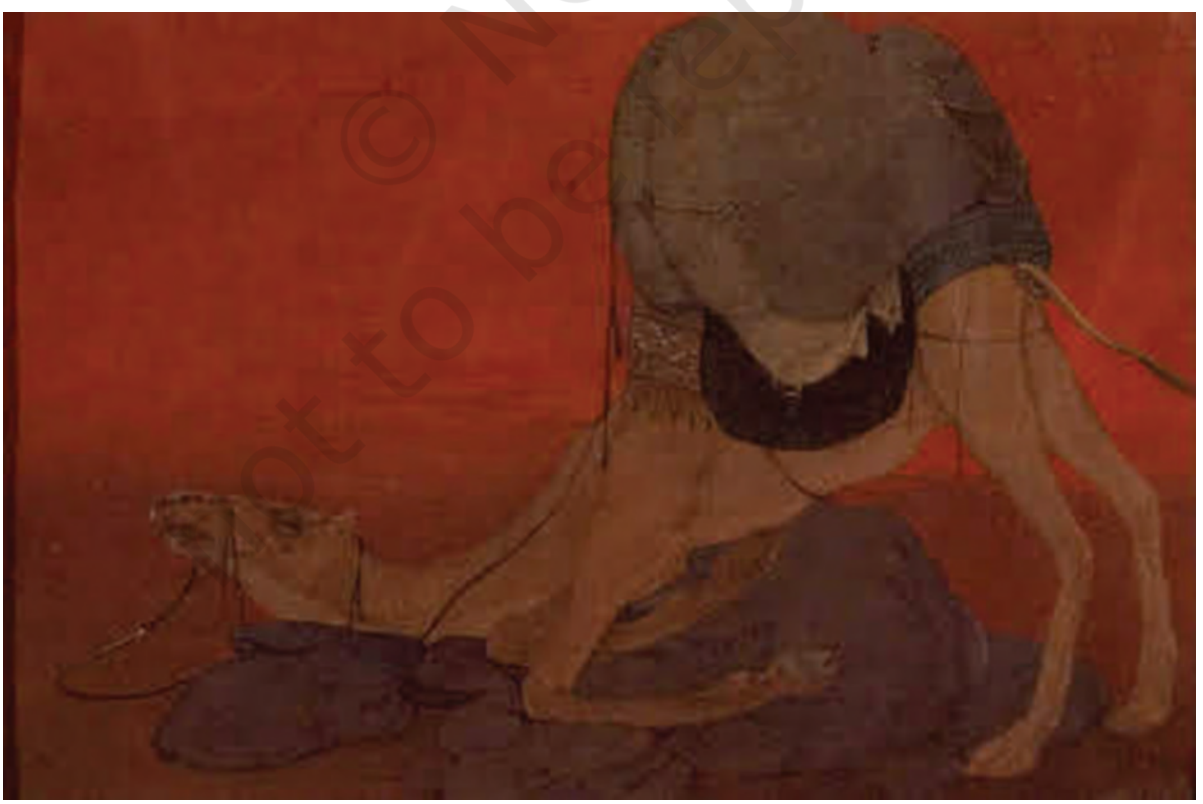
This is a gouache painting on paper made by Jamini Roy (1887–1972) in 1940. He was called the father of the folk renaissance in India, who created an alternative vision of modern Indian identity. In the mid–1920s, he travelled to the countryside of Bengal to collect folk paintings (*pats*) and learn from folk artisans. He wanted to learn from the expressive power of their lines. In this painting, a mother and her child are rendered with bold simplifications and thick outlines with sweeping brush strokes. The painting exudes a crude vigour hitherto unknown in Indian art. Figures are coloured in dull yellow and brick-red background, emulating the terracotta relief of his home village in Bankura. The two-dimensional nature of the painting is derived from *pat* paintings and his search for simplicity and pure form is visible. Roy borrowed volume, rhythm, decorative clarity and instrumentality of the *pat* in his artworks. To achieve and learn the purity of the *pat*, he first made many monochrome brush drawings, and then, gradually, moved to basic seven colours applied with tempera. He used Indian red, yellow ocher, cadmium green, vermilion, charcoal gray, cobalt blue and white made from organic material, such as rockdust, tamarind seeds, mercury powder, alluvial mud, indigo and common chalk. He used lamp black to outline the drawings and started making his own canvas with home-spun fabric (*pats* used paper or cloth or baked paper). Roy used the notion of village community as a weapon of resistance to colonial rule and a political act of making local signify national.

© NCERT not to be republished

JOURNEY'S END

Made by Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951) in 1913, this painting is in watercolour. Abanindranath Tagore was seen as a father figure of nationalist and modernism of art in India. He revived certain aspects of Indian and oriental traditions of paintings in terms of themes, style and techniques, and invented the wash painting technique. The wash technique yields a soft, misty and impressionistic landscape. This quality of hazy and atmospheric effects of the wash are utilised to be suggestive or evocative of an end of a life.

In this painting, a collapsed camel is shown in red background of dusk and in that sense it personifies the end of a journey through the end of a day. Abanindranath tried to capture the portrait and narration with the help of symbolic aesthetics on one hand and literary allusions on the other. The physical features of the camel rendered appropriately in fine lines and delicate tones, and its sensory texture leads us to the meaning of the painting. Abanindranath has also painted *The Forest*, *Coming of Night*, *Mountain Traveller*, *Queen of the Forest* and a series of 45 paintings based on *The Arabian Nights*.



© NCERT not to be republished

© NCERT not to be republished

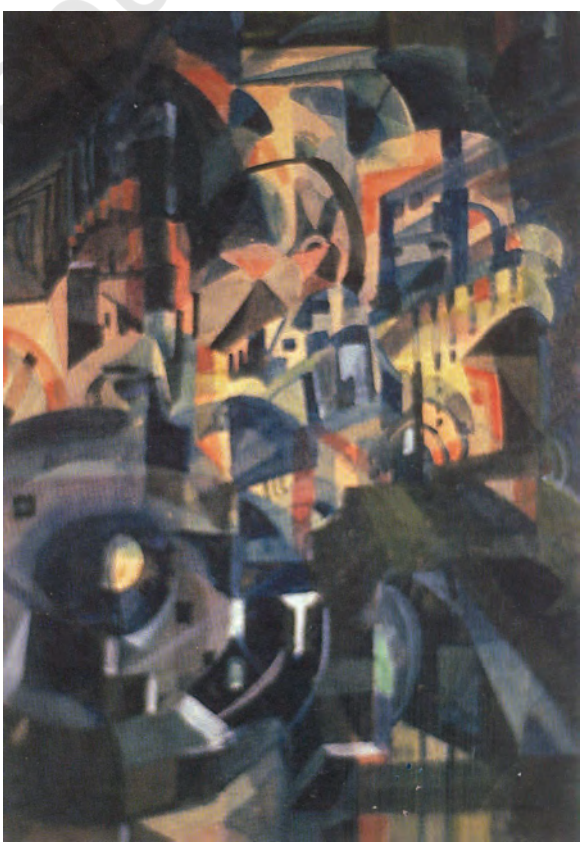
The Modern Indian Art 7

Introduction to Modernism in India

Fine arts was seen as European by the British. They felt that Indians lacked training and sensibility to be able to create and appreciate fine arts. By mid and late nineteenth century, art schools were established in major cities like Lahore, Calcutta (now, Kolkata), Bombay (now, Mumbai) and Madras (now, Chennai). These art schools tended to promote traditional Indian crafts, and academic and naturalist art that reflected Victorian tastes. Even the Indian crafts, which received support, were the ones based on European taste and on the demands made by its market.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was against this colonial bias that nationalist art emerged, and the Bengal School of Art, as nurtured by Abanindranath Tagore and E. B. Havell, was a prime example. India's first nationalist art school, Kala Bhavana, was set up in 1919 as part of the newly established Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, conceptualised by poet Rabindranath Tagore. It carried the vision of the Bengal School but also followed its own path in creating art meaningful for Indians. This was the time when the whole world was in a state of intense political turmoil in the wake of World War–I. Apart from the famous Bauhaus exhibition that travelled to Calcutta, as discussed in the previous chapter, modern European art influenced Indian artists through art magazines that were in circulation. Artists from the Tagore family—Gaganendranath and poet–painter Rabindranath, thus, knew about the international trends of Cubism and Expressionism, which had rejected academic

Gaganendranath Tagore, A Cubist City, 1925. Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata, India



© NCERT not to be republished

Rabindranath Tagore, Doodle, 1920. Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan, West Bengal, India

realism and experimented with abstraction; They thought that art need not copy the world but create its own world out of forms, lines and colour patches. A landscape, portrait or still life may be called abstract if it draws our attention to an abstract design created by forms, lines and colour patches.

Gaganendranath Tagore used the language of Cubism to create a unique style of his own. His paintings of mysterious halls and rooms were made with vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines, which were quite different from the Cubist style of famous artist Pablo Picasso, who invented the style using geometrical facets.

Rabindranath Tagore turned to visual art quite late in life. While writing poems, he would often make patterns out of doodles and developed a unique, calligraphic style out of crossed out words. Some of these were turned into human faces and landscapes, which floated captivatingly in his poems. His palette was limited with black, yellow ochre, reds and browns. However, Rabindranath created a small visual world that was a complete departure from the more elegant and delicate style of the Bengal School, which often drew inspiration from Mughal and Pahari miniatures along with Ajanta frescoes.

Nandalal Bose in 1921–1922 joined the Kala Bhavana. His training under Abanindranath Tagore made him familiar with nationalism in art but it did not hinder him from allowing his students and other teachers to explore new avenues of artistic expression.

Benode Behari Mukherjee and Ramkinker Baij, Bose's most creative students, gave a lot of thought as how to understand the world. They developed their own unique style of sketching and painting that could capture not only their immediate environment like flora and fauna but also those who lived there. Shantiniketan had a large population of Santhal tribe at its outskirts, and these artists often painted them and made sculptures based on them. Apart from this, themes from literary sources also interested them.

© NCERT not to be republished

Rather than making paintings around well-known epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, Benode Behari Mukherjee was drawn to the lives of medieval saints. On the walls of Hindi Bhavana in Shantiniketan, he made a mural called *Medieval Saints*, in which he charts a history of medieval India through the lives of Tulsi Das, Kabir and others, and focuses on their humane teachings.

Ramkinkar Baij was an artist given to the celebration of nature. His art reflects his everyday experiences. Almost all his sculptures and paintings are created as response to his environment. For instance, his *Santhal Family*, made as an outdoor sculpture within the Kala Bhavana compound, turned the daily activity of a Santhal family setting out for work into a larger than a life size piece of art. Besides, it was made out of modern material like cement mixed with pebbles, held in shape with the help of metal armature. His style was in sharp contrast with works of earlier sculptor like D. P. Roy Choudhury, who had used academic realism to celebrate the labour of working classes, *The Triumph of Labour*.

Jamini Roy, Black Horse, 1940. NGMA, New Delhi, India

If rural community was important for Benode Behari Mukherjee and Ramkinker Baij, Jamini Roy, too, made his art relevant to this context. We had briefly discussed Roy in the last chapter as an artist, who rejected his own training received at the Government School of Art, Calcutta. Being a student of Abanindranath Tagore, he realised the futility of pursuing academic art. He noticed that the rural, folk art in Bengal had much in common with how modern European masters like Picasso and Paul Klee painted. After all, Picasso had arrived at Cubism by learning from the use of bold forms found in African masks. Roy, too, used simple and pure colours. Like village artists, he also made his own colours from vegetables and minerals. His art lent itself to easy reproduction by other members in his family, quite like the artisanal practice followed in villages. However, what differentiated his art from that of village artists was that

© NCERT not to be republished

Roy signed on his paintings. His style is seen as uniquely personal, distinct from both the academic naturalism of art schools and from Raja Ravi Varma's Indianised naturalism, as well as, from the delicate style practised by some of the Bengal School artists.

Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941), half Hungarian and half Indian, emerges as a unique female artist, who contributed immensely to modern Indian art through the 1930s. Unlike others, she was trained in Paris and had a first-hand experience in European modern art trends, such as Impressionism and post–Impressionism. After deciding to make India her base, she worked to develop art with Indian themes and images. Amrita Sher-Gil assimilated miniature and mural traditions of Indian art with European modernism. She died young, leaving behind a remarkable body of work, which is important for its experimental spirit and the impact it left on the next generation of Indian modernists.

Modern Ideologies and Political Art in India

Soon after Sher-Gil's death, India, still under British rule, was deeply affected by global events like World War–II. One of the indirect outcomes was the outbreak of the Bengal famine, which ravaged the region forcing massive rural migration to cities.

Prodosh Das Gupta, Twins Bronze, 1973. NGMA, New Delhi, India

The humanitarian crisis compelled many artists to reflect on their role in society. In 1943, under the leadership of Prodosh Das Gupta, a sculptor, few young artists formed the Calcutta Group, which included Nirode Mazumdar, Paritosh Sen, Gopal Ghose and Rathin Moitra. The group believed in an art that was universal in character and free from older values. They did not like the Bengal School of Art as it was too sentimental and deeply interested in the past. They wanted their paintings and sculptures to speak of their own times.

They started to simplify their visual expression by excluding details. With such an attempt, they could emphasise on elements, material, surface, forms, colours, shades and textures, etc. A comparison may be

© NCERT not to be republished

drawn against a sculptor from South India, P. V. Janakiram (Ganesh) who worked with metal sheets in a creative way.

Seeing abject poverty around them and the plight of people in villages and cities, many young artists in Calcutta were drawn to socialism, especially Marxism. This modern philosophy, which was taught by Karl Marx in the mid–nineteenth century in the West, asked important questions about class difference in society and appealed to these artists. They wanted their art to talk about these social problems. Chittoprasad and Somnath Hore, the two political artists of India, found printmaking to be a strong medium to express these social concerns. With printmaking, it is easier to produce multiple number of artworks and reach out to more number of people. Chittoprasad's etchings, linocuts and lithographs showed the deplorable condition of the poor. It is not surprising that he was asked by the Communist Party of India to travel to villages worst affected by the Bengal Famine and make sketches. These were later published as pamphlets under the name, *Hungry Bengal*, much to the annoyance of the British.

Chittoprasad, Hungry Bengal, 1943. Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi, India

M. F. Husain, Farmer's Family, 1940. NGMA, New Delhi, India

The Progressive Artists' Group of Bombay and the Multifaceted Indian Art

The desire for freedom—political, as well as, artistic—soon spread widely among young artists, who witnessed Independence from the British Raj. In Bombay, another set of artists formed a group, called The Progressives in 1946. Francis Newton Souza was the outspoken leader of the group, which included M. F. Husain, K. H. Ara, S. A. Bakre, H. A. Gade and S. H. Raza. Souza wanted to question the conventions that had prevailed in art schools. For him, modern art stood for a new freedom that could challenge the traditional sense of beauty and morality. However, his experimental works were focused mainly on women, whom

© NCERT not to be republished

he painted as nudes, exaggerating their proportions and breaking the standard notions of beauty.

M. F. Husain, on the other hand, wanted to make the modern style of painting understandable in Indian context. For example, he would paint using the western expressionist brush strokes with bright Indian colours. He not only drew from Indian mythology and religious sources but also from the style of miniature paintings, village crafts and even folk toys.

As a result of successfully combining a modern style of painting with Indian themes, Husain's art came to eventually represent Indian modern art in the international art world. *Mother Teresa* is an example to understand how he adapted modern art to paint themes important to Indian, as well as, international audience.

Abstraction – A New Trend

While Husain largely remained a figurative artist, S.H. Raza moved in the direction of abstraction. It is not surprising then that landscape was a favourite theme for this artist. His colours ranged from bright to soft, modulated monochromes. If Husain used the figurative language of modern art to show Indian themes, Raza made a similar claim with abstraction. Some of his paintings draw from old *mandala* and *yantra* designs, and even use *bindu* as a symbol of oneness from Indian philosophy. Later, Gaitonde, too, pursued abstraction, while artists like K. K. Hebbar, S. Chavda, Akbar Padamsee, Tyeb Mehta and Krishen Khanna would keep moving between abstraction and figurative.

Abstraction was important for many sculptors like Piloo Pochkhanawala and printmakers like Krishna Reddy. For them, the use of material was as important as the new shapes they were creating. Whether in painting, printmaking or sculpture, abstraction had a wide appeal for many artists across the 1960s and 1970s. In South India, K. C. S. Paniker, who later went on to establish Cholamandalam, an artist village near Madras, was a pioneer in abstraction. In fact, he showed by imbibing artistic motifs from Tamil and Sanskrit scripts, floor decorations and rural crafts that abstraction has a long history in India.

S. H. Raza, Ma, 1972. Bombay, India

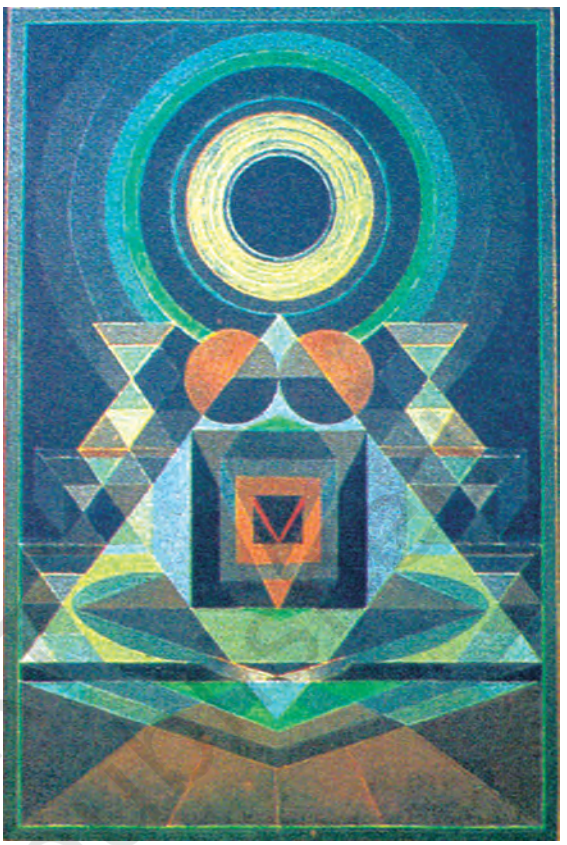
© NCERT not to be republished

However, the tension between internationalism (in which an artist could freely use the style of western modern trends like Cubism, Expressionism, Abstraction, etc.) and indigenous (in which artists turned to native arts) grew acute by the late 1970s. Sculptors like Amarnath Sehgal struck a balance between abstraction and figurative and created wiry sculptures as in *Cries Unheard*. In case of Mrinalini Mukherjee, her works tilted more towards abstraction when she took up the innovative medium of hemp fibre, as in *Vanshri*.

Many Indian artists and critics grew worried about their imitation of modern art from the West and felt the need to establish an Indian identity in their art. In the 1960s, Biren De and G. R. Santosh in Delhi and K. C. S. Paniker in Madras moved in this direction when they turned to the past and local artistic traditions to create a unique Indian abstract art.

This style became successful in the West and later in India and came to be known as Neo-Tantric art because of its use of geometrical designs seen in traditional diagrams for meditation or *yantras*. Such works made during the height of the Hippie movement in the West found a ready market, and were sought by galleries and collectors alike. This style may also be seen as Indianised abstraction. In Biren De's works, this move led to captivating experiments with colours and patterns. G. R. Santosh created a visual sense of cosmic union of male and female energy, reminding us of *purusha* and *prakriti* of the *Tantric* philosophy. K. C. S. Paniker, on the other hand, made use of diagrams, scripts and pictograms that he saw in his region and evolved out of them a style, which was both modern and uniquely Indian.

In that sense, eclecticism, in which an artist borrowed ideas from many sources, became an important feature of many Indian modernists, of which Ram Kumar, Satish Gujral, A. Ramachandran and Meera Mukherjee are some examples.



G. R. Santosh,
Untitled,
1970. NGMA, New Delhi, India

K. C. S. Paniker,
The Dog,
1973. NGMA, New Delhi, India

© NCERT not to be republished

Since the time of the Bombay Progressive Artist's Group, artists began to write their own manifestos or writings, in which they declared the main aims of their art and how it differed from others. In 1963, another group was formed under the leadership of J. Swaminathan, named Group 1890. Swaminathan also wrote a manifesto for the group, in which the artists claimed being free from any ideology. Rather than a set programme, they adopted a fresh look at the material used in painting, and wrote about the importance of rough texture and surface in their works as a new artistic language. It included artists, such as Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, Jyoti Bhatt, Ambadas, Jeram Patel, and sculptors like Raghav Kaneria and Himmat Shah. It was a short lived movement but left an impact on the next generation of artists, especially, those associated with the Cholamandalam School near Madras.

Tracing the Modern Indian Art

Modern art in India may have drawn some ideas from the West but it differed from it significantly. The fact that modernism as an art movement came to India when it was still a British colony is hard to deny. This is clear when we turn to artists like Gaganendranath, Amrita Sher-Gil and Jamini Roy, who began to be considered as modern during as early as 1930s. In the West, particularly in Europe, modern art came up when academic realism in art academies began to be rejected. These modern artists saw themselves as *avant garde* or at the frontier of change from tradition to modernity.

With the phenomenal development of technology after the Industrial Revolution, the traditional art that decorated churches and palaces lost its meaning. Early modern French artists like Edouard Manet, Paul Cezanne, Claude Monet and others saw themselves working outside the main art institutions. Cafes and restaurants became important places for artists, writers, film-makers and poets to meet and discuss about the role of art in modern life. In India, artists like F. N. Souza and J. Swaminathan, who rebelled against art institutions, identified themselves with these western artists. What made a big difference in the story of modern Indian art is that modernity and colonialism were closely connected. Nationalism was not only a political movement that arose following the Indian Revolt of 1857 but it gave

© NCERT not to be republished

rise to cultural nationalism. Ideas like *swadeshi* in art were held by art historians like Ananda Coomaraswamy around the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It meant that we cannot understand Indian modernism as a blind imitation of the West but there was a careful process of selection carried out by the modern artists in India.

We have already discussed how nationalism in art can be traced to the rise of Bengal School under the leadership of Abanindranath Tagore in the late nineteenth century in Calcutta. Subsequently, it took a different form at Kala Bhavana, Shantiniketan. Artists like Nandalal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar, students of Abanindranath Tagore, were inclined to draw inspiration from past traditions like the Ajanta frescoes, and Mughal, Rajasthani and Pahari miniature paintings, among others.

However, it was with artists like Gagendranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore, Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil, Ramkinker Baij and Benode Behari Mukherjee that we can say a distinct modern attitude finds its place in Indian art. Let us take an overview of how modern art developed in India.

An interesting fact to note about modern Indian art is that the subject matter in painting and sculpture was largely drawn from rural India. This is the case even with the Bombay Progressives and the Calcutta group during 1940s and 1950s. City and urban life rarely appeared in works of Indian artists. Perhaps, it was felt that real India lives in villages. The Indian artists of the 1940s and 1950s rarely looked at their immediate cultural milieu.

The New Figurative Art and Modern Art from 1980s

Since the 1970s, many artists began to move towards the use of figures and stories that are easy to recognise. Perhaps, this was a way to express their concern towards social problems, following the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971 and the birth of Bangladesh. While K. G. Subramanyan, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh and Bhupen Khakar in Baroda started using storytelling in their paintings, Jogen Chowdhury, Bikash Bhattacharjee and Ganesh Pyne in West Bengal, too, painted the social problems that disturbed them.

Like the earlier generations of Indian artists, they, too, explored old miniature paintings and popular art forms like

© NCERT not to be republished

calendar and folk art to be able to paint stories that could be understood by the larger public.

Figures of people and animals could be seen in the work of printmakers like Jyoti Bhatt (*Devi*), Laxma Goud (*Man Woman, Tree*) and Anupam Sud (*Of Walls*) as a way to show conflict between men and women in a world full of social inequality. Arpita Singh, Nalini Malani, Sudhir Patwardhan and others turned their attention to the plight of people living in big cities. Many of these modern artists painted such urban problems and tried to see the world from the eyes of the oppressed.

In the 1980s, an important departure in this attitude can be seen in the Baroda Art School, which came up in the late 1950s. There was a change in the way artists began to take interest in their immediate surroundings. Many artists became aware of their role as citizens in a democracy and social and political concerns found place in the artistic production of this period.

They found a way to combine fact with fiction, autobiography with fantasy and drew their style from other art historical styles. Gulam Mohammed Sheikh would paint the busy lanes of the old bazaar in Baroda while invoking a medieval town in Sienna and the style of Italian painters like the Lorenzetti brothers. Being a teacher of art history, he knew how artists painted in earlier times in different parts of the world.

K. G. Subramanyan, Sheikh's teacher and a founding member of the Baroda Art School, had studied in Shantiniketan. He had learned about the public role of art from his teachers, Benode Behari Mukherjee and Ramkinker Baij. He was interested in mural art or art on large public buildings, which can be seen by everyone. He was attracted to the technique of sand casting, which was known to local Rajasthani artists. From them, he learned how to create large-scale relief sculptures by repeating the basic unit of shape.

G. M. Sheikh,
City for Sale,
1984.
Victoria and Albert Museum,
London, UK

Among the many murals he made, there is a famous one in Kala Bhavana on the outer wall of a building. He did not want art to remain confined to art galleries but be made a part of public buildings for all to see. Such a public

© NCERT not to be republished

view of art can also be seen in a popular exhibition called 'Place for People' in 1981. It was shown in Delhi and Bombay and had six artists— Bhupen Khakhar, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, Vivan Sundaram, Nalini Malani, Sudhir Patwardan and Jogen Chowdhury. The first two were from Baroda and an eminent art critic, Geeta Kapur, wrote about it. So far, we came across manifestos written by artists themselves, but in this case, the role of the art critic to explain what the artists wanted to express became important.

A painter like Bhupen Khakhar painted the local barber or watch repairer with the same earnestness as he painted the experiences of queer men and their struggle with the middle class morality. An important contribution of the Baroda narrative painters was their eclectic interest and acceptance of popular art forms that are visible everywhere from trucks on highways to autorickshaws, in the back alleys of small towns and in small shops.

K. G. Subramanyan, Three Mythological Goddesses, 1988. Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India

© NCERT not to be republished

Taking a clue from Khakhar's bold move and the Baroda artists' celebration of popular art, younger painters in Mumbai found inspiration in popular images on calendars, in advertisements and film hoardings. These painters went to the extent of using photographic images on canvas.

This style is different from what we have seen so far. It is not modern in the same sense. It relies on double meanings and experimental technique, in which watercolour is painted in the style of a photograph.

New Media Art: from 1990s

With liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s, the impact of globalisation came to be felt first in big cities. While on one hand, India made advancement in information technology, it also saw many social and political issues. In such extraordinary times of economic progress and social unrest, artists began to look for ways of reacting to the changing times. Medium like easel painting and sculpture that was created by artists, who would earlier proudly sign on them as an expression of their unique creativity, lost importance. Instead, the newly available medium, i.e., video caught their attention. Even photography seemed attractive as it allowed multiple copies to reach numerous people simultaneously.

However, the art form that was increasingly seen as contemporary was installation. It provided a way to combine painting, sculpture, photography, video and even television in one space. This medium, which could spread out into a whole hall could fully grab the attention from all sides. On one wall, you could see a painting, while on another, a video with sculptures hanging from the wall with photographs displayed in glass cases. It offered a new immersive experience, which affected almost all our senses. However, it was more dependent on technology and it is, therefore, not surprising that most of the early installation artists came from big cities—Nalini Malani from Mumbai and Vivan Sundaram from Delhi. However, their subject matter was grim and thought provoking.

Bhupen Khakhar, Janata Watch Repairing, 1972. Private Collection, India

Photography, long regarded as the rival of painting because of its easy copy of world, gave new ideas to the artists. They developed

© NCERT not to be republished

a new technique called 'photorealism', which was used by Atul Dodiya in *Bapu* at Rene Block Gallery, New York. Many younger artists used oil or acrylic to paint in the manner of a photograph or television screen. T. V. Santosh and Shibu Natesan used photorealism to comment on communal violence on one hand and at the same time, gave us a glimpse of the new look that cities had acquired with India's technological advancements.

Photography could also be used to document changes in society as artists saw them. Sheba Chachi, Ravi Agarwal and Atul Bhalla, among others, photographed those, who lived on the margins of our society, whom we do not notice much in our day-to-day life—women ascetics, queer people, and so on. Often, they would express their concern about ecology like pollution of rivers and urban congestion. Photography and video have inspired many contemporary artists.

Contemporary art is constantly changing with artists and curators experimenting with technology and redefining the role of art to better understand the world we are a part of.

At the turn of the present century, we find that almost all major cities of the country have art galleries—both private and public, and artists' community dedicated towards creating art using a wide range of media, including digital paintings. Their experimentations, influences and expressions have been documented through catalogues. Even social media has played a major role in evolving local art. As a student of visual arts one must explore artists' work in their own cities, as well as, the cities they visit, collect information about their works, visit art galleries and learn about their contribution to our society.

PROJECT

Visit the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) or any other museum in your city or NGMA's website and work on a timeline to see different trends in modern Indian art after 1947 in terms of internationalism and indigenous. Students should also make a note of where the timeline ends. Teachers should discuss the role of curators and art critics in conveying the meaning of artworks to the public. The type of material used by each artist may also be noted.

© NCERT not to be republished

EXERCISE

1. *Pata Chitra* is a form of audio-visual storytelling still practised in some parts of India. Compare this traditional form of storytelling with modern storytelling or narratives adopted by some Baroda artists since 1980s.
2. How does new technology like video and digital media inspire contemporary artists to experiment with new themes? Comment on different genres of such art forms like video, installation and digital art.
3. What do you understand by 'public art'? Find out about different communities that live around your residence or school and their understanding of art. If you have to prepare a public monument, how will you design it in a way that people can relate with it?
4. How do you understand the 'art world'? What are the different components of the art world and how does it relate with the art market?

© NCERT not to be republished

THE LIVES OF MEDIEVAL SAINTS

The Lives of Medieval Saints, a mural in Hindi Bhavana, Shantiniketan, was created by Benode Behari Mukherjee around the eve of India's Independence from Colonial rule, during 1946–1947. The mural employs the technique of *fresco buono* and covers almost 23 metre of the entire upper half of the three walls of the room.

Mukherjee skillfully reminds us of the syncretic and tolerant tradition of Indian life as found in the teachings of great Bhakti poets like Ramanuja, Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas and others.

Despite his poor eyesight, the artist sketched directly on the walls without compositional sketches. *The Lives of Medieval Saints* was painted in modern style, where each figure is created with bare minimum lines. At the same time, each figure relates with its neighbour by way of rhythmic network of lines. In some ways, the mural reminds us of a painted woven tapestry, a profession that many of these saints belonged to. He was one of the earliest artists in modern India to realise the potential of a mural to become public art.

© NCERT not to be republished

MOTHER TERESA

This painting by M. F. Husain of the saintly figure, Mother Teresa, belongs to the 1980s. It is painted in a style typically of this artist, who created a new language of modern Indian art. The figure of the faceless Mother appears several times, each time holding a baby with a lot of attention given to the hand. The central figure of the seated Mother has a grown up man lying on her lap horizontally. This speaks of the artist's familiarity with European art, especially, the famous sculpture of Italian Renaissance master, Michelangelo's *Pieta*. On the other hand, the flat shapes used to depict the scene are modern. They appear like a collage of paper cutouts. The artist is not interested in showing us the life of Mother Teresa realistically but uses bare suggestions. We, as viewers, have to follow the clues left by the artist to make sense of the story. It is the kneeling figure of the woman on one side that gives us a hint that the story about healing and nursing the helpless is unfolding in India.

© NCERT not to be republished

HALDI GRINDER

Amrita Sher-Gil painted *Haldi Grinder* in 1940. This was the time when she was seeking inspiration from India's idyllic rural scene. Such a scene, depicting Indian women busy in a traditional activity of grinding dry turmeric, had to be painted in Indian style. It is not surprising that she used bright, saturated pigments to paint this work. Given her training in modern art in Europe, she was quick to see parallels between miniature traditions of north India and modern art of Paul Gaugin, an artist she admired. This is evident in the way she has placed bright colour patches close to each other and created shapes of figures by colour contrast and not outline. Such a style of painting reminds us of, as for instance, the Basohli paintings from north India. The women and trees are painted as flat shapes. Sher-Gil is not interested in creating any depth in the landscape and prefers a semi-abstract pattern as a modern artist.

© NCERT not to be republished

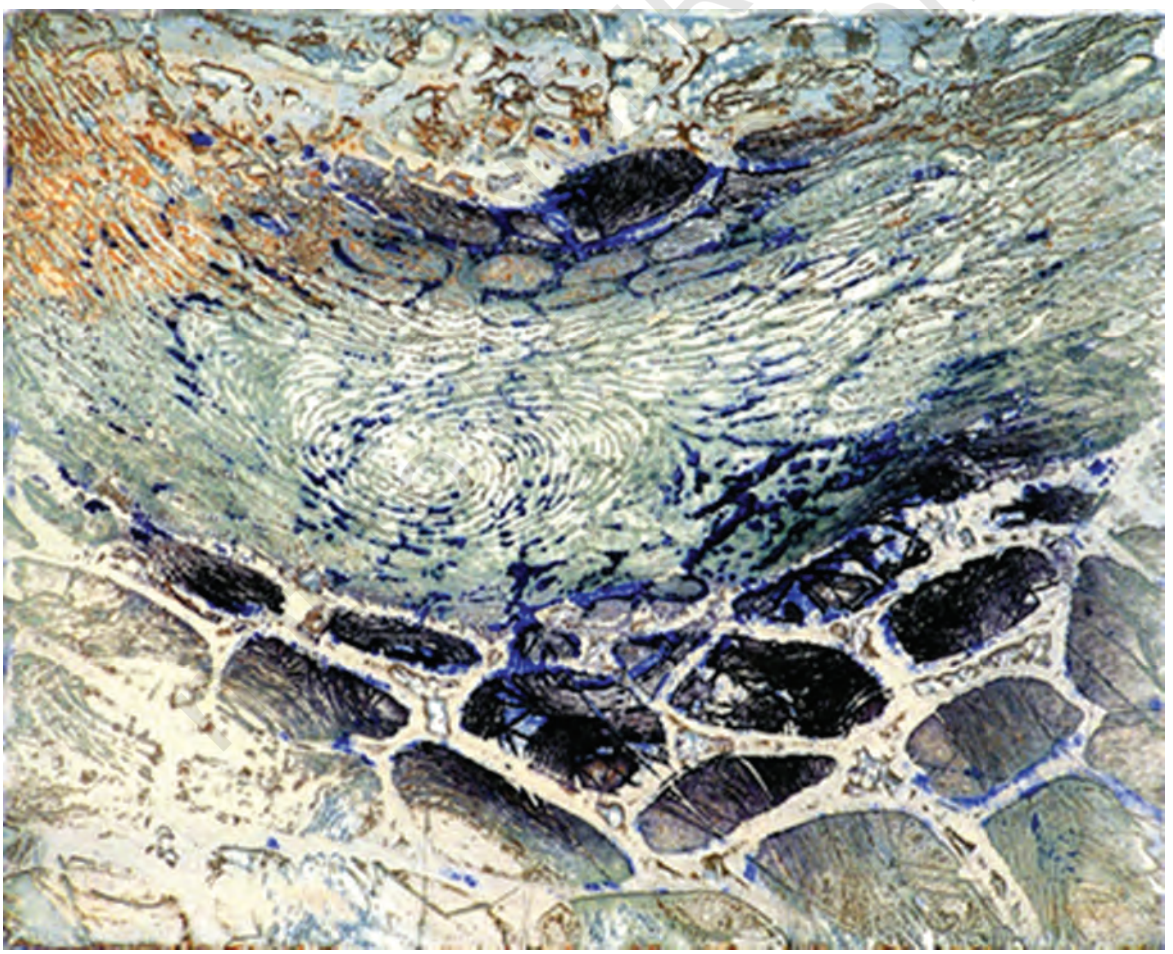
FAIRY TALES FROM PURVAPALLI

This is a painting using water and oil colours on acrylic sheet and was created by K. G. Subramanyan in 1986. This is the work of the prolific writer, scholar, teacher and art historian, who draws inspiration from his familiarity with different art traditions from India and the world. The title refers to his home in Purvapalli, a locality in Shantiniketan, from where his imagination seems to be travelling all around the world. His imaginary landscape consists of a strange world, in which birds and animals rub shoulders with humans. There are unusual trees that grow feathers in place of leaves. This style of painting is sketchy and colours are applied as in quick brush strokes. The palette remains earthy—ochres, greens and browns. The male and female figures on top reminds us of urban folk art like the Kalighat painting that was popular in Colonial Calcutta in the late nineteenth century. Again, as in traditional miniature paintings, figures are arranged on the top of other rather than behind each other, creating a flat space, a sign of modern art.

© NCERT not to be republished

WHIRLPOOL

This was a print made by India's celebrated printmaker Krishna Reddy in 1963. It is a captivating composition created out of various shades of blues. Each colour blends into the other to create a powerful web of design. It is the result of a new technique in printmaking that he developed along with a well-known printmaker, Stanley William Hayter, in the famous studio called 'Atelier 17'. This method came to be known as 'viscosity printing', in which different colours are applied on the same metal printing plate. Each colour is mixed with linseed oil in varied concentration to ensure that colours do not run into each other. The print's subject matter, dealing with water current, aptly captures the technique based on understanding how water and oil behave with each other. This celebrated print is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, USA.



© NCERT not to be republished

CHILDREN

This is a graphic print on paper done with monochromatic etching with aquatint made by Somnath Hore (1921–2006) in 1958. The experience of the Bengal Famine of 1943, left a lasting impression on him. His early sketches and drawings were spot and life drawings of hapless victims of the famine, suffering and dying peasants, sick and infirm destitute, and portraits of men, women, children and animals. These line drawings, which followed representational contours and tonal devices, were seldom adopted. In this etching, images of children were taken from the experience of the famine of 1943, which was etched in his memory. This is a close knit composition with five standing figures, having no background, perspective or surrounding situation as the figures are talking to themselves. The figures are linear, each with a skeletal torso of a huge malaria spleen and ribcage for the thorax. Supporting a huge skull, with a small face, the whole body is seen resting on two stick-like legs. Strong definitional lines of straight linear gestures, which etched each rib of the thorax and each cheekbone, appears as deep gashing wounds. The bone structure just beneath the skin renders the effect of malnutrition on the people. It creates narrative quality in the picture without taking recourse to placing the figures in a situation of supporting visual data, following reductionist and simplification method. These children represent the most vulnerable section of the society. Somanth Hore's some other artworks include *Peasants' Meeting*, *Wounded Animal*, *The Child*, *Mother with Child*, *Mourners* and the *Unclad Beggar Family*.

© NCERT not to be republished

DEVI

This is an etching on paper made by Jyoti Bhatt (1934) in 1970. He studied painting, printmaking and photography, and was inspired by his mentor K. G. Subramanyan. He carved out an art language based on folk traditions and popular practices. He brings together many visual elements into the a composite narrative. His works occupy tenuous balance between space tradition and modernity, where the past as a vibrant repository of forms is translated into dynamics of the contemporary. In this print, pictorial image of *Devi* is re-cast and re-contextualised with a linear drawing of the frontal face of a woman, folk motifs and patterns. The portrait of *Devi* is centrally placed as an iconic image. The two-dimensionality of words and motifs around the portrait expresses the *Tantric* philosophy, evoking the power of self-evolution and self-involution, seeing reality as the intertwining dynamic and static principle of Shakti. Bhatt also made artworks like *Kalpvruksha*, *Self-Portrait*, *Forgotten Monuments*, *Sita's Parrot*, *Still Life with Two Lamps*, *Scattered Image under the Warm Sky*, *Tirthankara,* etc.

© NCERT not to be republished

OF WALLS

This is an etching made from zinc plate and printed on paper made by Anupam Sud in 1982. She had studied printmaking at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College, London, in the early 1970s. When she returned to India, she was drawn to its everyday reality. Apart from her deep interest in social problems faced by people, belonging to marginalised communities of the society, she was keen to understand them artistically. Notice how she creates an interesting form of a woman by hollowing out the face. The absence of face gives it a brooding and sad expression. The painting depicts the figure of a lonely woman seated on the pavement before a dilapidated wall. In the foreground, we only get a glimpse of the lower part of a poor man sleeping on the ground, contrasting with the clothed woman, and adds to the sadness of the print.

© NCERT not to be republished

Rural South Indian Man–Woman

This is an etching print on paper made by Laxma Goud (1940...) in 2017. Laxma Goud, a fine draftsman and printmaker, studied mural painting and printmaking at M. S. University, Baroda, and was influenced by his teacher K. G. Subramanyan's experiments with the narrative mode and figuration of visual traditions, classical, folk and popular cultures. He tries to erase sharp demarcations between major and minor arts, thus, giving it linguistic breath. This has helped him straddle various mediums, such as glass painting, terracotta and bronze. In this etching, human figures are shown with trees in the background. It is based on his childhood memories immersed in nature. The work is a combination of highly ornate contours, realistic depiction of the peasants and a gentle stylization that gives a touch of puppets to the figures represented in the print. This print is line-based and coloured. Some of his other artworks are *Woman*, *Man*, *Landscape of Turkey*, *Untitled*, *Xiyan China,* etc.

© NCERT not to be republished

TRIUMPH OF LABOUR

This is an open air large-scale sculpture in bronze made by Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhury (1899–1975). It was installed at Marina Beach, Chennai, on the eve of the Republic Day in 1959. It shows four men trying to move a rock, rendering the importance and contribution of human labour in nation building. Unconquerable men are wrestling with nature, doggedly, indeterminately and powerfully. It is an image of labour against the elements of nature, a well-known romantic subject of the nineteenth century. Chowdhury loved to dwell on the strong musculature of his workers, revealing their bones, veins, flesh, etc. He portrayed the extreme physical effort of loosening a massive, immovable rock. Human figures are installed in a way that create a curiosity in us as viewers. It attracts the viewers to see it from all sides. The image of group labour is placed on a high pedestal, thereby, replacing the notion of portraits of kings or British dignitaries.

© NCERT not to be republished

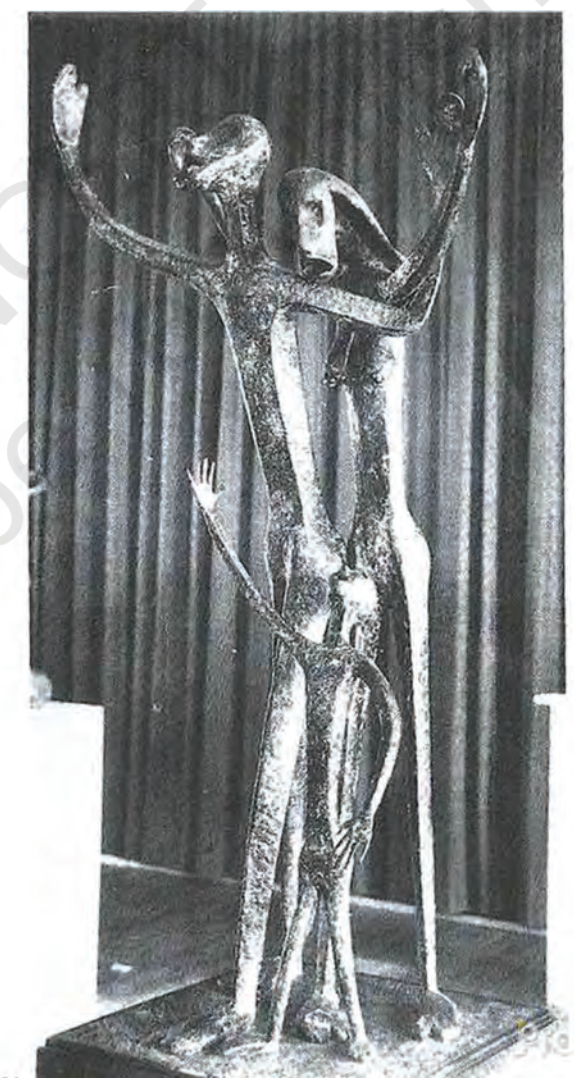
SANTHAL FAMILY

This is an open air large-scale sculpture created by Ramkinker Baij in 1937. It is made out of metal armature and cement mixed with pebbles, and placed in the compound of Kala Bhavana, Shantiniketan, India's first national art school. It shows a scene of a Santhal man, carrying his children in a double basket joined by a pole, and his wife and dog walking alongside. Perhaps, it speaks of the family migrating from one region to another, carrying all their frugal possessions. This must be an everyday scene for the artist living amidst the rural landscape. However, he gives it a monumental status. The sculpture is made in the round, which means that we can see it from all sides. It is placed on a low pedestal, making us feel as if we are part of the same space. The significance of this work is that it is regarded as the first public modernist sculpture in India. We do not need to go to a museum to see it as it is placed outside Kala Bhavana. The material of which it is made of is important. The artist has avoided traditional medium like marble, wood or stone, and has preferred cement, the symbol of modernisation.

© NCERT not to be republished

CRIES UN-HEARD

This is a sculpture in bronze made by Amarnath Sahgal in 1958. Although the artist only uses abstraction, in which three figures are stick-like and shown in flat rhythmical planes, yet it is easy to understand them as a family—husband, wife and child. They are shown flinging their arms above and crying out for help in vain. Through the medium of sculpture, their helplessness expressed by the hand gesture is turned into a permanent shape. It is possible for us to read this work as socialist, whereby, the artist pays homage to millions of destitute families in need of help, whose cries fall on deaf ears. None other than socialist poet, Mulk Raj Anand, wrote movingly about this work, which now is in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.



© NCERT not to be republished

GANESHA

This is a sculpture in oxidised copper made by P. V. Janakiram in 1970, and is in the collection of NGMA, Delhi. He has used sheets of copper to create pictorial sculpture as free-standing forms, and ornamented their surface with linear elements. Metal sheets are beaten into concave planes on which are welded linear details. These linear elements work as facial features and decorative motifs to suggest religious icons, inviting intimate contemplation. Janakiram is influenced by the ancient temple sculpture of South India. The image of *Ganesha,* crafted frontally, lends an important indigenous character of cave and temple sculpture. In this sculpture, Ganesha is palying *vina*, a musical instrument. Details on the sculpture and technical blending of material, nevertheless, reveal his meticulous craftsmanship. He also experimented with the 'open-endedness' quality of indigenous workmanship. *Ganesha* reveals his understanding of traditional imagery. He has elaborated linear details into overall form. The sculpture is conceived in terms of linear silhouettes instead of emphasis on three-dimensionality, despite its volume. Rhythm and growth are incorporated through lyrical stylisation. It is also an amalgamation of folk and traditional craftsmanship.

© NCERT not to be republished

VANSHRI

This artwork was created by Mrinalini Mukherjee in 1994. She uses an unusual material to make this sculpture. She uses hemp-fibre, a medium that she experimented with from the early 1970s. Going by the intricate way, she has knotted together and woven a complex shape out of jute fibre. It seems to be the result of years of handling the new material. For many years, her works of this kind were dismissed as craft. Only recently her fibre works have attracted a lot of attention for originality and boldness of imagination. In this work, entitled *Vanshri* or 'Goddess of the Woods', she turns this ordinary material into a monumental form. If you carefully look at the figure's body, you can notice that it has a face with an inward expression and protruding lips, and above all, a powerful presence of natural divinity.

© NCERT not to be republished

The Living Art Traditions of India 8

12144CH08

There has always been a timeless tradition of art forms, which have been practised for different reasons among people, living far from urban life in interior terrains of forests, deserts, mountains and villages. So far, we have studied art of a certain time, a period named after a place or dynasties, who ruled different parts of the Indian subcontinent for few hundred years or so. But what about common people? Were they not creative? Was there no art that existed around them? From where did the artists come to the courts or patrons? What did they use to make before coming to cities? Or even now, who are the unknown artists making handicrafts in faraway deserts, mountains, villages and rural areas, who have never been to an art school or design institute or even attended formal schooling?

Our country has always been a repository of indigenous knowledge, which has been transferred from one generation to another. Artists in each generation have created the best of works out of available material and technology. Many scholars named these art forms as minor arts, utility art, folk art, tribal art, people's art, ritual art, crafts, and so on. We know that these art forms have existed from time immemorial. We have seen the examples in pre-historic cave paintings or works of pottery, terracotta, bronze, ivory, etc., of the Indus period as well. During the early history and its subsequent times, we find references of artists' communities everywhere. They made pots and dresses, jewellery and ritual or votive sculptures. They decorated their walls and floors and did many more artistic things to fulfill their daily needs and supply their works to local markets at the same time. There is an instinctive aesthetic expression in their creations. There is symbolism, specific use of motifs, materials, colours and methods of making. There is a thin line between art of

© NCERT not to be republished

the people and crafts as both involve creativity, instinct, necessities and aesthetics.

Even now, in many pockets, we find such artifacts. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a new perspective emerged among modern artists when they looked at traditional art forms around them as sources of inspiration for their creative pursuits in India, as well as, the West. In India, post-Independence a revival of handicraft industry took place. The sector became organised for commercial production. Apart from continued practice, it gained a unique identity. With the forming of States and Union Territories, each one of them showcased their unique art forms and products in their respective State emporia. The art and craft traditions of India showcase the tangible heritage of the country with history of more than five thousand years. Though we know many of these, let us talk about few of them. By and large, there has been a religious or ritualistic overtone with richer symbolism, utilitarian and decorative aspects, associated with the day-to-day practices at home to production on a large scale.

Painting Tradition

Among the many popular traditions of painting, Mithila or Madhubani painting of Bihar, Warli painting of Maharshtra, Pithoro Painting of North Gujarat and western Madhya Pradesh, Pabuji ki Phad from Rajasthan, Pichhwai of Nathdwara in Rajasthan, Gond and Sawara Paintings of Madhya Pradesh, Pata Chitra of Odisha and Bengal, etc., are few examples. Here, a few of them have been discussed.

Mithila painting

Among the most known contemporary painterly art forms is Mithila art that derives its name from Mithila, the ancient Videha and birthplace of Sita. Also called Madhubani painting after the nearest district capital, it is a widely recognised folk art tradition. It is presumed that for centuries, women living in this region have painted figures and designs on the walls of their mud houses for ceremonial occasions, particularly, weddings. People of this area see the origin of this art form at the time of Princess Sita getting married to Lord Rama.

These paintings, characterised by bright colours, are largely painted in three areas of the house— central or outer

© NCERT not to be republished

courtyards, eastern part of the house, which is the dwelling place of *Kuladevi*, usually, Kali, and a room in the southern part of the house, which houses the most significant images. Various armed gods and animals or images of women at work like carrying waterpots or winnowing grain, etc., are vividly portrayed in the outer central courtyard. The inner verandah, where the family shrine— *devasthana* or *gosain ghar* is located, *griha devatas* and *kula devatas* are painted. In the recent past, many paintings are done on fabric, paper, pots, etc., for commercial purposes.

The most extraordinary and colourful painting, however, is done in the part of the house known as the *kohbar ghar* or inner room, where magnificent representations of *kohbar*, a lotus with a stalk in full bloom having metaphoric and tantric connotation along with images of gods and goddesses are painted on freshly plastered walls of the room.

Among other themes that are painted are episodes from the *Bhagvata Purana*, *Ramayana*, stories of Shiva-Parvati, Durga, Kali and *Rasa-Lila* of Radha and Krishna. Mithila artists do not like empty spaces. They fill in the entire space decoratively with elements from nature like birds, flowers, animals, fish, snakes, the Sun and the moon, which often have symbolic intent, signifying love, passion, fertility, eternity, well-being and prosperity. Women paint with bamboo twigs to which some cotton swab, rice straw or fibre is attached. In earlier days, they made colour from mineral stones and organic things, such as *phalsa* and *kusum* flowers, *bilwa* leaves, *kajal*, turmeric, etc.

Warli painting

The Warli community inhabit the west coast of Northern Maharashtra around the north Sahyadri range with a large concentration in the district of Thane. Married women play a central role in creating their most important painting called *Chowk* to mark special occasions. Closely associated with the rituals of marriage, fertility, harvest and new season of sowing, *Chowk* is dominated by the figure of mother goddess, Palaghat, who is chiefly worshipped as the goddess of fertility and represents the corn goddess, Kansari.

© NCERT not to be republished

She is enclosed in a small square frame decorated with 'pointed' chevrons along the outer edges that symbolise Hariyali Deva, i.e., the God of Plants. Her escort and guardian is visualised as a headless warrior, riding a horse or standing beside her with five shoots of corn springing from his neck, and hence, called Panch Sirya Devata (five-headed god). He also symbolises the guardian of the fields, Khetrapal.

The central motif of Palaghat is surrounded by scenes of everyday life, portraying acts of hunting, fishing, farming, dancing, mythological stories of animals, where the tiger is conspicuously visible, scenes of buses plying and the busy urban life of Mumbai as people of Warli see around them.

These paintings are traditionally painted with rice flour on earth coloured walls of their homes. As mentioned earlier, are painted to promote fertility, these paintings avert diseases, propitiate the dead, and fulfill the demands of spirits. A bamboo stick, chewed at the end, is used as the paintbrush.

Gond painting

Gonds of Madhya Pradesh have a rich tradition with their chiefs ruling over Central India. They worshipped nature. Paintings of Gonds of Mandla and its surrounding regions have recently been transformed into a colourful depiction of animals, humans and flora. The votive paintings are geometric drawings done on the walls of huts, portraying Krishna with his cows surrounded by *gopis* with pots on their heads to which young girls and boys make offerings.

© NCERT not to be republished

© NCERT not to be republished

Pithoro painting

Painted by Rathva Bhils of the Panchmahal region in Gujarat and Jhabua in the neighbouring State of Madhya Pradesh, these paintings are done on the walls of houses to mark special or thanksgiving occasions. These are large wall paintings, representing rows of numerous and magnificently coloured deities depicted as horse riders.

The rows of horse rider deities represent the cosmography of the Rathvas. The uppermost section with riders represents the world of gods, heavenly bodies and mythical creatures. An ornate wavy line separates this section from the lower region, where the wedding procession of Pithoro is depicted with minor deities, kings, goddess of destiny, an archetypal farmer, domestic animals, and so on, which represent the earth.

© NCERT not to be republished

Pata painting

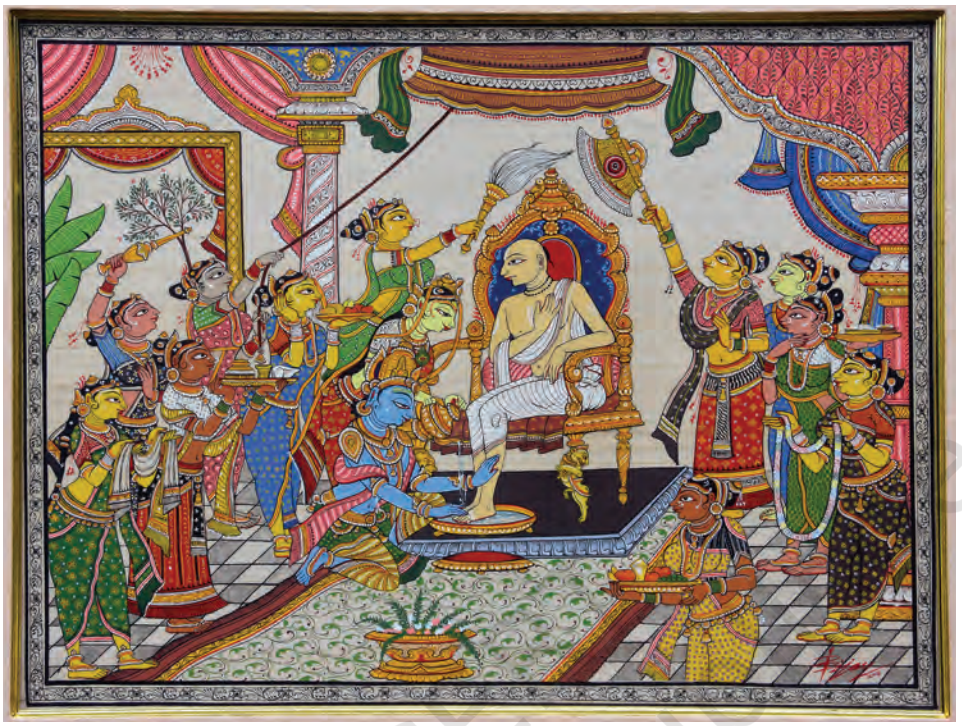
Done on fabric, palm leaf or paper, scroll painting is another example of art form practised in different parts of the country, especially, Gujarat and Rajasthan in the West and Odisha and West Bengal in East. It is also known as *Pata, Pachedi, Phad*, etc.

Bengal *patas* comprise the practice of painting on cloth (*pata*) and storytelling in regions of West Bengal. It is the most receptive oral tradition, constantly seeking new themes and formulating novel responses to major incidents in the world.

The vertically painted *pata* becomes a prop used by a *patua* (performer) for performance. *Patuas,* also called *chitrakars*, belong to communities largely settled around Midnapore, Birbhum and Bankura regions of West Bengal, parts of Bihar and Jharkhand. Handling the *pata* is their hereditary profession. They travel around villages, displaying the paintings and singing the narratives that are painted. Performances happen in common spaces of the village. The *patua* narrates three to four stories each time. After the performance, the *patua* is given alms or gift in cash or kind.

Puri *patas* or paintings evidently acquire their claim to recognition from the temple city of Puri in Odisha. It largely comprises the *pata* (initially, done on palm leaf and cloth but now done on paper as well). A range of themes are painted, such as the daily and festival *veshas* (attires) of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra (e.g., *Bada Shringar Vesha, Raghunath Vesha, Padma Vesha, Krishna–Balaram Vesha, Hariharan Vesha,* etc); *Rasa* paintings, *Ansara patti* (this substitutes the icons in the *Garbhagriha,* when they are removed for cleaning and fresh colouring is done after *Snanayatra*); *Jatri patti* (for pilgrims to take away as memorabilia and put them in personal temples at home), episodes from the myths of Jagannath, such as the *Kanchi Kaveri Pata* and *Thia-badhia pata,* a combination of aerial and lateral view of the temple with the icons and temples around or depiction of festivals around it.

© NCERT not to be republished



Patachitras are done on small strips of cotton cloth, which is prepared by coating the cloth with soft white stone powder and glue made from tamarind seeds. There is a practice of making the borders first. A sketch of the figures is, then, made directly with a brush and flat colours are applied. Colours, such as white, black, yellow and red are, usually, used. After completion, the painting is held over charcoal fire and lacquer is applied to the surface to make it water resistant and lend sheen to it. The colours are organic and locally procured. For example, black is obtained from lamp black, yellow and red from *haritali* and *hingal* stone, respectively, and white from powdered conch shells. Palm manuscripts are illustrated on a palm variety called *Khar-taad*. Paintings on these are not painted with brush but incised by a steel stylus, and then, filled in with ink, and sometimes, tinted with paint. There may also be some text accompanying these images. There are questions on whether to consider the palm leaf tradition a part of folk or sophisticated art as it has a lineage that stylistically connects it to the mural and palm leaf traditions of the eastern and other parts of the country.

Phads of Rajasthan

Phads are long, horizontal, cloth scrolls painted to honour folk deities of pastoral communities inhabiting the region around Bhilwara in Rajasthan. For such communities, safeguarding their livestock is the foremost concern. Such concerns purposely reflect in their myths, legends and worship patterns. Among their gods are defied cattle heroes, who are brave men who sacrificed their lives while protecting the community's cattle from robbers. Designated by the broad term *bhomia*, these heroes are honoured, worshiped and remembered for their acts of martyrdom. *Bhomias*, such as Gogaji, Jejaji, Dev Narayan, Ramdevji and Pabhuji, have inspired widespread cult following among the communities of Rabaris, Gujjars, Meghwals, Regars and others.

Illustrating the valorous tales of these *bhomias*, the *phads*, are carried by *bhopas*, the itinerant bards, who travel the territory, displaying them while narrating tales and singing devotional songs associated with these hero-deities in night-long storytelling performances. A lamp is held against the *phad* to illuminate images that are being spoken about. The *bhopa* and his companion perform to the accompaniment

© NCERT not to be republished

of musical instruments, such as *ravanahattha* and *veena,* and employ the *Khyal* style of singing. Through the *phads* and *phad banchan,* the community remembers the hero as a martyr and keeps his story alive.

Phads, however, are not painted by the *bhopas*. They have traditionally been painted by a caste called 'Joshis' who have been painters in the courts of the kings of Rajasthan. These painters specialised in court patronised miniature paintings. Hence, the association of skilled practitioners, bard musicians and court artists place *phads* higher than other similar cultural traditions.

Sculptural Traditions

These refer to the popular traditions of making sculptures in clay (terracotta), metal and stone. There are numerous such traditions across the country. Some of them are discussed here.

Dhokra casting

Among the popular sculptural traditions, *Dhokra* or metal sculptures made from lost wax or *cire perdue* technique is one of the most prominent metal crafts of Bastar, Chhattisgarh, parts of Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Midnapore in West Bengal. It involves casting of bronze through the lost wax method. The metal craftsmen of Bastar are called *ghadwa*. In popular etymology, the term *'ghadwa'* means the act of shaping and creating. It is probably this that gives the casters their name. Traditionally, the *ghadwa* craftsmen, besides supplying the villagers with utensils of daily use also made jewellery, icons of locally revered deities and votive offerings in the form of snakes, elephants, horses, ritual pots, etc. Subsequently, with a decrease in demand for utensils and traditional ornaments in the community, these craftsmen began creating new (non-traditional) forms and numerous decorative objects.

Dhokra casting is an elaborate process. Black soil from the riverbank is mixed with rice husk and kneaded with water. The core figure or mould is made from this. On drying, it is covered with a second layer of cow dung mixed with clay. Resin collected from *saal* tree is, then, heated in a clay pot till it becomes liquid to which some mustard oil is also added and allowed to boil. The boiling liquid is, then, strained

© NCERT not to be republished

© NCERT not to be republished

through a cloth, collected and kept in a metal vessel over water. As a result the resin solidifies but remains soft and malleable. It is, then, taken apart in small pieces, heated slightly over low burning coal and stretched into fine threads or coils. Such threads are joined together to form strips. The dried clay form is, then, overlaid with these resin strips or coils and all decorative details and eyes, nose, etc., are added to the figures. The clay form is, then, covered with layers— first of fine clay, then, with a mixture of clay and cow dung, and finally, with clay obtained from ant hills mixed with rice husk. A receptacle is, then, made from the same clay and fixed to the lower portion of the image. On the other side, a cup filled with metal pieces is sealed with the clay-rice husk mixture. For firing in the furnace, *saal* wood or its coal is preferred as fuel. The cup, containing metal, is placed in the bottom with clay moulds over it, and covered with firewood and potshards. Air is blown continuously into the furnace for about 2 to 3 hours till the metal turns into a molten state. The moulds are, then, taken out with a pair of tongs, turned upside down, given a brisk shake and the metal is poured through the receptacle. The molten metal flows exactly into the space once occupied by resin, which would by now have evaporated. The moulds are allowed to cool and the clay layer is hammered away to reveal the metal image.

Terracotta

The more ubiquitous sculptural medium prevalent across the country is terracotta. Usually, made by potters, terracotta pieces are votives or offered to local deities or used during rituals and festivals. They are made from local clay found on riverbanks or ponds. The terracotta pieces are baked for durability. Whether it is Manipur or Assam in the North-East, Kuchchha in Western India, Hills in the North, Tamil Nadu in the South, Gangetic plains or Central India, there is a variety of terracotta made by people of different regions. They are moulded, modeled by hands or made on a potter's wheel, coloured or decorated. Their forms and purposes are often similar. They are either the images of gods or goddesses. Like Ganesh, Durga or the local deity, animals, birds, insects, etc.

© NCERT not to be republished